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PERIODICALS DEPARTMENT

EDITORIAL

EICHMANN WITH A SMILE

From the Berlin wall to San Salvador's Sheraton Hotel, history rushes forward, leaving the United States floundering in its wake. In the process, the present Administration demonstrates time and again its passivity and the limits of its ideological imagination. There are also privileged moments when one is permitted to look, with laserlike clarity, straight into the soul of George Bush—and see that nothing is there.

There was such a moment at a Republican fundraiser in Chicago on November 20, when two Catholic nuns confronted the President and demanded to know why U.S. dollars were being used to murder Jesuit priests in El Salvador. Bush seemed to enjoy the exchange hugely. "Now you be quiet," he said, pointing at one nun. When he had shut the sister up, he lavished praise on El Salvador's "certifiably free elections" and promised that President Cristiani was "trying to do a job for democracy." Sensing that this was going over nicely with his audience, Bush stood back with a broad smile to milk the applause. "I love it," he gloated.

Contemplating George Bush, one recalls Hannah Arendt's description of Adolf Eichmann. "Officialese is my only language," Eichmann tells his interrogator apologetically. "But," Arendt explains, "the point here is that officialese became his language because he was genuinely incapable of uttering a single sentence that was not a cliché." With George Bush, only the clichés have changed, mirroring the culture: Read my lips; free elections; I love it.

The best thing that can be said in Bush's defense is that he did not invent the war in El Salvador; he only inherited it. In visiting slaughter on the people of Central America, Ronald Reagan may have wrought greater evil than George Bush. But never was he so stupefyingly banal.

DRUG WAR ZONE

Peter Andreas

FOUNDATIONS BITE THE BIG APPLE

Robert Fitch

RACISM IN THE FIREHOUSE

Paul Rockwell

POEMS OF DESIRE

Don Bogen

ROAD WORRIER

Pagan Kennedy

BRANAGH'S 'HENRY V'

Stuart Klawans

VELÁZQUEZ

Arthur C. Danto

CHANGING THE POLITICAL MAP

EUROPE IN THE POST- YALTA ERA

DANIEL SINGER

History knows no neat radical breaks. Even the dramatic changes in East Germany, for all their suddenness, do not make much sense without the background of *perestroika*, and they are also the beginning of big changes that will affect the shape of Europe. Yet events such as the crumbling of the Berlin wall are history's turning points. They are both symptoms of its acceleration and symbols of a changing age. They compel us to reassess the past, to revise our values, to make tentative projections despite a number of unknowns.

Of all the Eastern European capitals, Berlin was probably the hardest to set in motion. Sofia now seems to be following, and Prague's days are also clearly numbered. (Rumania is clearly a special case.) The end of an era is thus undeniable, but in order to counter the massive propaganda that is designed to write the whole story as an epitaph for socialism, one must explain that what is now coming to an end is not socialism but the Stalinist model that was brought to Eastern Europe by the Soviet tanks liberating it from the Nazis. The successive failures to overhaul this model after the departure of the dictator will have to be examined to see why it is beyond repair—and what can be put in its place. First, however, we must look at another, larger denouement that is forecast for the not too distant future: the end of Yalta, the settlement imposed by the victorious powers after World War II.

The Crimean spa of Yalta was the site of the second of three conferences—the first was in Teheran; the third, in Potsdam—at

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LETTERS.

EXCELLENT FOPPERY

Waltham, Mass.

I'm grateful for Larry Danson's praise of *Reinventing Shakespeare* in "The Flexible Bard" [Oct. 16], and for his constructive engagement with its substance. But in claiming that the chapter "Present Tense" is an exercise in self-promotion he seriously misleads readers. In a seventy-five-page chapter, which refers by name to more than 160 contemporary interpreters of Shakespeare, I pay no more attention to *The Oxford Shakespeare* than to earlier editions, and I consistently attribute any significance it may have to Stanley Wells, not myself. Danson in a short review spends more words on "Shall I Die?" than I do in a long book. I mention myself briefly, inevitably, in connection with work on the two versions of *King Lear*, but stress the contributions of Peter Blayney, Stephen Urkowitz and Michael Warren; nor is that portion of the antepenultimate section of a long chapter in any sense the "climax" of the book. I attended—and mention my attendance at—only one of the five conferences I describe. By devoting so much of his review to me, Danson contributes to what he deplores, the cult of personality.

Gary Taylor

DANSON REPLIES

Princeton, N.J.

Gary Taylor doesn't do himself justice. He's a good writer; he doesn't need the first person singular to impress his personality on his work. He may not have been present at all those conferences but he's everywhere in the book. Readers, of whom he deserves to have many, may judge for themselves whether "self-promotion" is misleading.

I'm sorry the printer inadvertently dropped our mutual friend Stanley Wells's name from my review.

Lawrence Danson

RESPONSIBLE OPPOSITION

Miami, Fla.

Regardless of what you may think of us, no one can deny that we know something about the opposition to the Noriega dictatorship. We must say that the first time we heard about the mythical "Panama *contras*" was in Tony Avirgan's article in the September 18 issue of *The Nation*. We have asked responsible opposition leaders in and out of Panama, and they all share our ignorance on the matter. The only reference we have found is in the Noriega press, which perhaps has some psychiatric, but certainly not political or journalistic value.

Avirgan refers to hair-raising acronyms that are nothing more than acronyms. He also quotes a mysterious veteran of "Panamanian military intelligence" who is "leading a commando group that will soon carry out raids in Panama," and that is waiting for

orders from the C.I.A., an organization for which Noriega worked for twenty-two years and that still holds cinders of old love for the dictator. The unnamed character is nothing more than a Noriega *agent provocateur* rejected by all real opposition leaders. The harassers of Indians near Pavones were no doubt members of the Panamanian Defense Forces, probably G-2 (our Macoutes), doing as they have always done. They are the only armed Panamanians who wander around the Costa Rican countryside terrorizing its inhabitants.

Avirgan gives as proven that the Panamanian *contras*, which he just invented, do exist, and he establishes a farfetched and dangerous analogy between the Nicaraguan *contras* and our imaginary *contras* that is lacking in political value. It goes something like this: The *contras* fight against a revolutionary government. The *contras* fight against Noriega's government. Therefore, Noriega's government is revolutionary.

The Panamanian fight against narcomilitarism has been nonviolent because it is best suited for our temperament. As the experiences of Haiti, Cuba, Chile, Nicaragua and Paraguay attest, the type of fight chosen determines in large measure the behavior of the government that replaces the present horror. We do not intend to commit the same mistakes.

Before faithfully taking note of the delusions floated by Noriega and the fantasies of some Panamanian exiles, Avirgan should, as all responsible journalists do, consult with recognized leaders of the opposition, who are not at all inaccessible.

Miguel Antonio Bernal

Roberto Eisenmann

Guillermo Sanchez

AVIRGAN REPLIES

San José, Costa Rica

It comes as no surprise to me that Bernal, Eisenmann and Sanchez had no previous knowledge of the Panamanian *contras*. These three men, while claiming to be among the "recognized" leaders of the Panamanian opposition, are primarily recognized for leading wealthy Panamanians who have recently turned against General Noriega.

These Panamanians have opposed Noriega for the past few years only by beating on pots and pans and occasionally closing their shops for a day. They are totally unable to forge links with workers or peasants even though large sectors of these groups have come to oppose Noriega as well.

The Panamanian *contras* I have been following have some links to the remnants of the Southern Front in Nicaragua and claim to have links to elements of the Panamanian Defense Forces. They hold the leaders-in-exile of the civil opposition in contempt.

They certainly do not keep these leaders informed of their activities.

That the Panamanian *contras* are real, there is no doubt. They are not an invention of Noriega's press. Their existence has been reported in the Costa Rican, U.S. and British news media. I have seen them with my own eyes and have interviewed more than a dozen people involved in the movement. At least one commander has been seen, wielding a weapon, on the *CBS Evening News*. At least three times in recent months Costa Rican police have arrested Panamanians with large quantities of very real arms belonging to this "mythical" force. There is currently a scandal raging over the September 20 landing in Costa Rica of a Panamanian Defense Forces helicopter. There were Panamanian soldiers and Costa Rican Civil Guardsmen aboard. Civil Guard Lieut. Carlos Alvarez Segura has testified that he was participating in a joint exercise "to track down and capture Panamanian guerrillas."

To say that the Indians of Pavones are being harassed by Noriega agents pretending to be opposition guerrillas sounds very similar to Adolfo Calero's claims that Nicaraguan peasants are being killed by Sandinista soldiers impersonating *contras*.

As for the analogy that I am accused of creating, which likens a revolutionary government in Nicaragua to a revolutionary government in Panama, I never said and do not believe any such thing. I do not believe that the current government of Panama is in any way revolutionary. There are principles of national sovereignty and nonintervention which apply to the situation in Panama today. But upholding those principles, while possibly serving Noriega's interests, should not be confused with support for Noriega.

I made no judgments about the strength or viability of the Panamanian *contras*. We are still waiting for them to fire their first shot. If the recent history of the C.I.A.'s efforts on Nicaragua's Southern Front are anything to go by, the similarly organized effort in Panama will be crippled by corruption, divisiveness and incompetence.

Bernal, Eisenmann and Sanchez demonstrate their ignorance of one face of the opposition to General Noriega. It is difficult for them, living in the United States, to keep track of what is happening in the mountains on the Costa Rican/Panamanian frontier.

Tony Avirgan

The Nation welcomes letters—typed, double spaced and no longer than 300 words, please. Longer letters may be edited for reasons of space. Our policy is to publish as many letters as space permits, but inevitably a backlog develops, so please bear with us.

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EDITORIALS.

Spread Eagle

Ever since Mikhail Gorbachev announced major unilateral cuts in Soviet military forces, pressure has been building in Washington for similar trims in U.S. military capabilities. With Congress determined to reduce the Federal deficit and the White House unwilling to raise taxes, reductions in military spending appear inescapable. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney bowed to the inevitable on November 17 when he ordered the military services to plan for a cut of \$180 billion in the projected Pentagon budget for fiscal years 1992-94.

While Cheney's economic realism is welcome, his approach to the budget crisis is not. In Pentagon terms \$180 billion is lunch money. Cheney was obviously trying to pre-empt the calls for deeper and more realistic cuts that will come.

Furthermore, rather than initiate a thorough reassessment of U.S. military policy—designed to identify which military missions we can maintain and which we should eliminate—Cheney simply ordered the armed forces to select those programs or weapons they are prepared to do without. In response, the services are likely to ax (reluctantly, to be sure) some of their least-cherished programs but not to abandon any of their basic military "roles and missions." In other words, each of the armed forces will attempt to do everything it did

before, except with a little less of the fancy hardware it had come to take for granted under the Reagan Administration.

That outcome is most unfortunate, because it avoids what is needed most: a full-scale reappraisal of U.S. military policy in a post-cold war era. At a time of diminished East-West tensions and declining resources, the United States must abandon its go-everywhere, do-anything globalist military strategy and trim its commitments.

What are our truly vital national security interests and obligations? Which are less vital? Do we need a six-ocean Navy? Can we afford one? Those are the kinds of questions Congress should be asking, not how many Stealth bombers we can afford.

As long as the United States attempts to sustain a globalist military posture its forces will always be regarded as inadequate for their multiple tasks, and Congress will be under pressure to ratchet up defense spending. And as long as we retain an international-cop strategy, we will continue to risk entanglement in regional conflicts similar to Vietnam. To avoid these outcomes we must say once and for all that this country can't do everything, and that it must limit its commitments only to what it can truly afford and politically support.

Losing Gamble

The day after the brutal assassinations in El Salvador of six Jesuit priests, their cook and her daughter, Senator John Kerry was terribly upset. "Not one more dime of aid should go to the Salvadoran military as long as the death squads are allowed to act with impunity," he proclaimed at a Congressional hearing. Kerry flayed the Administration for "rushing more military aid to El Salvador" instead of pressing the security forces to purge those involved with right-wing death squads. "We cannot allow this outrage to continue," Kerry thundered.

But two months earlier, Kerry had joined his fellow liberal Democrat, Senator Christopher Dodd, in pushing for \$90 million in no-strings-attached military aid for the Salvadoran Army. On September 20, Kerry and Dodd spoke out against a modest bill sponsored by Senator Patrick Leahy that made a portion of the money conditional on progress in human rights. The two grand strategists argued that sending unrestricted military aid would keep the Salvadoran Army happy and help President Alfredo Cristiani control the right-wing fanatics in its ranks, as well as in his own political party, Arena. "I am willing to take a gamble," Kerry said.

He lost. Following the vote, violence against the right's favorite targets escalated. The house of Rubén Zamora, leader of the center-left Popular Social Christian Movement, was bombed. The offices of the Fenastras union were bombed. The priests were tortured and killed.

And now, belatedly, Kerry has seen the light. He was the prime mover behind a bill that would withhold 30 percent of military aid until the Salvadoran government brings the

priest killers to trial. The bill failed, with Dodd again leading the give-Cristiani-a-chance crowd. Only if the Salvadoran president fails to negotiate an end to the conflict and to probe the Jesuit killings immediately, Dodd said, should U.S. backing be restricted.

Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee after the murder of the priests, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Bernard Aronson pushed the Bush line—no restrictions on aid. When Kerry demanded to know how the Administration intends to tame the military fanatics, Bush's man offered the pious hope that "implicit in our support is a demand that [the military and the government] make real progress" in human rights.

"If Father Ellacuría had not been murdered . . . this hearing would be very different," Aronson noted testily. He was right. But Congress should have told Cristiani two months ago, "Get rid of the death squads or no more aid." That was the gamble worth taking.

Drug War Zone

The Bush Administration has repeatedly assured policy-makers and the American people that U.S. troops have not become frontline drug warriors in the coca-rich jungles of South America. As Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney has said, "Our U.S. military personnel are not to accompany host country troops on operations. . . . We aren't flying their helicopters for them. We are not traveling with their units as advisers into the field when they're out on operational assignments." Bush has stressed that U.S. military personnel in Colombia, Peru and Bolivia are there only to "provide training, equipment and operative support."

But the weekly newspaper *Army Times* contradicts the Administration's claims. *Army Times* is produced by Times Journal Company of Springfield, Virginia, which also publishes *Navy Times*, *Airforce Times*, *Federal Times*, *Military Market* and *Defense News*, among others. *Army Times* has a worldwide circulation of 131,000, and almost all its readers are U.S. military personnel. A spokesperson for the Department of the Army told me, "We watch *Army Times* closely. We work hard with them to get their stories right." A Pentagon spokesperson told me that *Army Times* is "absolutely credible . . . like *The Washington Post*" for the Army. The paper reported on October 2, "Despite denials by the Bush administration that U.S. forces have a direct combat role in the fight against South American cocaine cartels, Army Special Operations Forces boast they are on the front line in the escalating war on drugs." A Green Beret master sergeant quoted in the paper said, "We have been there. And we are either going back there or we're already back there. And, between the G-forces [guerrillas] and the D-armies [drug lords] and sometimes even hostile host forces, it's very hard to keep up with who's trying to blow you away."

The article says that "Special Operations sources at

Southern Command, or SOUTHCOM, in Panama; at Fort Bragg, N.C.; and at U.S. Special Operations Command here confirm the long history of training provided by the Green Berets, including 'baby-sitting their students during first-blood days,' as one official put it." One Special Operations staff officer at SOUTHCOM noted, "There are a lot of ways to get killed down here and our best survivors here have been the Berets. It only makes common sense to let them go on combat missions with their newly trained and equipped antidrug teams. School is one thing. These jungles are another."

The Green Beret master sergeant told *Army Times* that Special Operations troops became involved in the anti-drug missions as part of the Foreign Internal Defense Program, in which they trained local forces—a rapidly growing area of concentration for Special Operations forces. According to the Green Beret, "It is very difficult to properly train these armies to perform long-range recon patrols for drug targets without supervising them on at least their first few missions."

Army Times notes that Gen. James Lindsay is commander in chief of the Joint Special Operations Command, which unifies the undercover forces of the Army, Navy and Air Force. He is reportedly the first four-star general to wear the green beret and one of the founders of Special Operations. General Lindsay has asked the Department of the Army to bolster U.S. forces in South America, according to *Army Times*. "Now, all over Latin America, Green Berets are on the alert and preparing to 'shift and fill the gaps' in the drug war."

"There's a lot of people who are trying to portray this as another Vietnam situation," says White House Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater. "So we want to go to some lengths to knock [that] down." But another article in the same issue of *Army Times*, titled "Vietnam ghosts haunt soldiers in drug fight," makes a direct comparison between the situation in the jungles of South America and Vietnam. One Vietnam veteran described the newly constructed antinarcotics base at Santa Lucia in Peru's Upper Huallaga Valley (source of roughly 60 percent of the coca used to make cocaine destined for the U.S. market) as being "just like a firebase in Vietnam," with its guard towers, concentric perimeters of barbed wire and sandbagged fortifications. The Santa Lucia base is in the middle not only of the world's largest coca-growing region but also of an intense war zone largely controlled by the ultraradical Maoist Sendero Luminoso ("Shining Path") insurgents. The distinction between counternarcotics and counterinsurgency operations becomes easily blurred in the war-torn valley. The article notes, "The long-range reconnaissance patrols that were the staple of Army special forces in Southeast Asia are again the heart and soul of Green Beret operations in Latin America."

Responding to official claims that U.S. troops are not becoming "directly" involved in jungle operations, Representative Alfred McCandless has charged the Administration with "deception." At a House Government Operations subcommittee hearing in October, he told Richard Brown, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Inter-American Security, "This thing is going to blow up in your

face—or in our face—when one of these military people gets killed in a raid on a lab."

PETER ANDREAS

Peter Andreas is a research associate at the Institute for Policy Studies.

Devil's Stylebook

With apologies to Ambrose Bierce, herewith the complete guide to the modern newspaper.

Beat *n.* A field of expertise COVERED by a REPORTER who is not expert in it

Byline *n.* The means by which a REPORTER renounces all personal responsibility for the content of a newspaper article

Corporate *Adj. functioning as n.* An aloof quorum of high priests, residing in a distant city and gifted with a clairvoyant knowledge of the multiple and special needs of diverse communities

Corpse *n.* A photo opportunity

Cover *vt.* To place something upon or over, so as to protect or conceal

Editor *n.* The chief cause and enforcer of dead lines

Journalism *n.* A mode of political discourse now practiced solely in the Soviet Union

News *n.* Something that has happened before

News hole *n.* A portion of the printed page insufficient for the whole news

New York Times, The *n.* The primary publication of the principal American city, admired out of all proportion to its actual quality by newspaper EDITORS, who thereafter instruct their REPORTERS never, under any circumstances, to produce an article similar to one that might typically appear there

Opinion *n.* A means of putting in one's own words the prevailing views of the establishment

Paragraph *n. obsolete, now considered vulgar* An abstract concept unknown to the modern EDITOR, reputed to have been three sentences in length

Personnel *n.* A department of the modern newspaper, requiring numerous employees, necessary to administer layoffs of newsroom staff

Publisher *n.* 1. *archaic* One who publishes 2. An advertising salesperson

Reader *n.* 1. *archaic* One who reads 2. A sports fan

Reporter *n.* 1. *archaic* One who reports 2. An obscure functionary, COVERING a BEAT

Story *n.* Any of the various levels of the building in which CORPORATE resides

USA Today *n.* The primary publication of the nation, derided and sneered at by newspaper EDITORS, who thereafter instruct their REPORTERS to imitate its every aspect

Write *v. obsolete* To engage in an esoteric rite concerned with the creation of PARAGRAPHS

JOHN OSBURN

John Osburn is the former arts editor of the Daily Camera in Boulder, Colorado.

BEAT THE DEVIL.

In Freedom's Name

I happened to be in Detroit the morning after the six Jesuits, their cook and her daughter were tortured and murdered. The *Detroit Free Press* led on its front page with an A.P. story beginning, "The United States condemned Thursday's slaying of six priests in El Salvador, asked for an investigation and said it was speeding delivery of military aid to the Salvadoran government."

This exhibited a terse grasp of the political realities involved, summing up U.S. policy toward El Salvador for the past decade in twenty-nine words. The headline informing the people of Detroit of the unpleasantness wrought by their tax dollars on the campus of the Central American University announced, "U.S. decries slayings in El Salvador."

The more conservative *Detroit News* did not deem the murders worthy of page one, running a brief story on page three, under the headline "U.S. asks inquiry in 6 priests' deaths." The *Free Press* and the *News* are now merging their business operations, court challenges having failed to stop the joint-operating agreement by which the Knight-Ridder and Gannett newspaper chains have successfully conspired to establish a monopoly in Motown. As was the case with many newspapers across the United States, no one reading the *News* story without additional information on hand would have known that a Jesuit priest had told U.S. reporters that a witness had seen thirty men in uniforms enter the campus shortly before the killings took place. The *News* dropped this particular paragraph from the Reuters dispatch.

Thus the ludicrous pretense that the F.M.L.N. might have murdered six important allies, hacking out their brains in the process, was sustained for the crucial first hours of the coverage in the U.S. press. Even after Bernard Aronson, the Bush Administration's Elliott Abrams follow-on, had testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that "what my guts tell me is that they were killed by the right," *The New York Times*'s Robert Pear felt it necessary to add that Aronson had offered no "evidence" for this assertion.

This is our old friend the smoking gun strategy, whereby ghastly crime and obvious perpetrator are held apart by solemn protestations that the s.g. has not been found and that some impersonator or double agent may have been at work. One of the foulest examples of this stratagem was at the onset of Liberty Weekend in 1986, when *contras* blew up a bus near El Cua, Nicaragua, killing thirty-four men, women and children. Stephen Kinzer, then *The Times*'s Nicaragua correspondent, preferred to stay in Managua and quote U.S. Embassy officials to the effect that this might in fact have been a Sandinista land mine. This past October, when *contras* honored the cease-fire in their traditional fashion by blowing up a truck, killing nineteen Nicaraguan militiamen on their way to register to vote, the U.S. press again rushed happily up the garden path, barking at the heels of the same old cat lobbed over the fence by embassy officials. Richard Boudreaux of the *Los Angeles Times* actually took the trouble to write an "investigative article" suggesting that it most likely was *contras* who blew up the militiamen. Amid these

tremendous efforts to prove that the world is round, the central but politically inconvenient fact that *contras* break cease-fires is shunted aside.

It's the same with the murder of the priests. The United States urges the Salvadoran government to hunt down the killers, and Christopher Dodd, the Democratic Senator from Connecticut, says that by golly, if the Cristiani government does not act with all due dispatch and zeal, U.S. aid may be suspended. This is the same craven legislator (often identified in the press as a man on the outer rim of political acceptability on Central America) who joined with Jesse Helms in September to praise the Arena government's new respect for human rights and then engineered an increase in military aid to El Salvador. Just two days before that the army had attacked some labor activists who sought sanctuary in a church, beating them savagely and raping some of the women. What would it take to get Dodd, swollen with "bipartisan" statesmanship, finally to concede that the party and government adorned by Cristiani is the same gang of Nazi killers denounced by former Ambassador Robert White all those years ago?

The murder of the priests was indeed lavish in its cruelty, to use the memorable phrase of the Jesuit Provincial for Central America, the Rev. José María Tojeira. But it was not more lavishly barbaric than the murder last spring of the young political activist who was seized in San Salvador in front of her children, bundled into a van, tortured with sulfuric acid, shot to death and then dumped in the street. Nor was it more vicious than the bomb that exploded in October at the headquarters of Fenastras, killing ten people, including the outstanding labor leader and government critic Febe Elizabeth Velásquez.

The U.S. press is now judiciously exploring the identity of the slayers of the Jesuits. Someone will no doubt be given a Pulitzer Prize one day for demonstrating that the order issued from the armed forces or from Roberto d'Aubuisson. Less than a month ago a Salvadoran Army deserter named César Vielman Joya Martínez was making the rounds on Capitol Hill telling press and politicians that he had taken part in torture and death squad operations conducted by the special forces GC-2 of the Salvadoran Army's First Infantry Brigade, with the knowledge of U.S. advisers who, in the deserter's words, "had control of the department." (These events are described in detail by Noam Chomsky in the December issue of *Zeta*.)

Joya Martínez gave accounts of eight death squad murders in which he had participated, and said he saw orders for seventy-two in all. Usually the victims were beaten nearly to death; then their throats were slit and their bodies thrown off cliffs into the sea or buried secretly. He said that the orders were issued by the Salvadoran Joint Chiefs of Staff, and he implicated the Deputy Minister of Defense and the current commander of the Belloso Battalion.

The Bush Administration said the charges were serious and warranted investigation. Almost a decade ago the Reagan Administration said the rape and murder of three Cath-

ALEXANDER COCKBURN

olic churchwomen was serious and warranted investigation. It's true that you can count the sadistic murder of a U.S. nun or a prominent Jesuit as worth, in mainstream news value, about 100 Salvadoran labor organizers or about 1,000 peasants, but the murders will not alter the unanimity of U.S. elites on national policy toward El Salvador.

It made no difference when the F.M.L.N. offered not so long ago a negotiating position that would have meant settling for the removal from the armed forces of the most egregious killers. This modest demand was rejected by the Cristiani government, which merely increased its campaign of terror, as evinced by the Fenastras bombing. The F.M.L.N. plainly felt it had the choice of asserting its political and military strength or watching the death squads rampage in the manner of 1981-83, while Senator Dodd praised the Arena government for newfound good manners.

There is no shame to which Congress and the press will not descend. Even as the Salvadoran Air Force bombed working-class districts of El Salvador, Ted Koppel asked a spokesman for the F.M.L.N. whether he saw an analogy between the guerrillas' activities in El Salvador and those of the U.S. military in Vietnam. Was not the F.M.L.N., Koppel asked, destroying El Salvador in order to save it? A few days later Lindsey Gruson of *The Times* and Douglas Farah of *The Washington Post* were insinuating that the killing of the Jesuits was a political boon to the F.M.L.N. (i.e., even if they didn't do it, they wanted to). Gruson's and Farah's predecessors wrote the same sort of thing about the murder of the churchwomen. Then as now the boon went to the armed forces, who have demonstrated for ten years that in El Salvador the deed can never be too barbarous for the U.S. government to go on paying for the men who did it.



Footnote: Cispes has called for marches throughout the country on December 2, to be followed by mass civil disobedience on December 4. Ring (202) 265-0890.

The Names of Freedom

The world is changing, no doubt about that. The politicians and the press were hailing the walk of East Berliners to freedom just a few days before the death squad strode onto the campus in San Salvador to defend the capitalist way. I left Detroit and came to Chicago to give a talk at the tenth anniversary of Guild Books, after which a man from the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union told me he'd been to a rally for Lech Walesa that had taken place in Chicago a couple of days earlier.

"You'd think that Walesa would have said something about the American labor movement," he said sadly, "but he didn't. He talked about American entrepreneurs and capitalism and how wonderful America was and how he wanted Poland to be like America, but he never said one word to labor. Here we have the miners on strike against Pittston, and Walesa could have said something about their struggle, but he didn't."

He didn't probably because he's a shrewd fellow who

reckoned that a U.S. Congress he's been begging to invest in Poland is not a Congress that wants to be reminded that workers' struggles don't take place only east of what used to be quaintly called the Iron Curtain, where maybe workers will soon learn that among the freedoms available in the capitalist world are those of being unemployed, without a roof over one's head or medical care of any sort (though probably not the imperishable freedom recently experienced by a young Salvadoran labor organizer who had his testicles cut off for daring to urge that apprentice telephone workers in San Salvador be paid for their labor).

True enough, the rules of the old cold war game are changing. Exactly where they are changing is open to doubt. In round one of Brazil's first free presidential elections in a generation Lula da Silva came in second. He may win in the runoff against Fernando Collor de Mello. Now, Lula and the Workers Party talk seriously about land reform and the need to correct some of the largest income differentials between rich and poor in the world. It was talk of land reform that helped prompt the generals' coup against João Goulart in 1964, a takeover connived at by the United States. Newly amended guidelines for the C.I.A. recently approved by the same U.S. Congress that applauded Walesa would allow the agency to support an assassination bid against Lula, Brazil's most renowned labor leader.

The rules are changing for the Pentagon too. The powerhouse of the postwar U.S. economy has been the Defense Department, which has supervised basic research and development and, in this free economy, produced the essential long-range economic planning. The air is now heavy with talk of budget cuts in military spending. *The Wall Street Journal's* headline over Alfred Malabre Jr.'s article of November 13 said it all: "Can Expansion Last If Cold War Ends?" Defense Secretary Dick Cheney is talking about \$180 billion in projected spending cuts over the fiscal years 1992 through 1994. This is being interpreted as a 5 percent cut in real terms. This is not true. Remember that the cuts are in projected totals against a projected rate of inflation that itself is being revised. In its five-year plan for spending the Defense Department includes a "negative wedge" aimed purely at reconciling its projections with those of the Office of Management and Budget. So the cuts are taking place partly in accounting totals designed to correct for imbalances in estimates of interest and inflation rates no one yet knows. One D.O.D. veteran of these labyrinths tells me he reckons the cut over 1992-94 would be 2 percent in real terms.

The big cuts will be in force structure, not in procurement and R&D. The aerospace factories of Los Angeles County and Long Island and Seattle will pulse on. But for how long? The postwar system that has engineered a \$300 billion defense budget, that welcomes Walesa and sponsors the killers of Jesuits now faces the danger of a peace from which petty wars against terror or drug runners will provide only temporary respite. Killing the Jesuit fathers or financing the bombing of El Salvador's working-class districts is cheap. Where is the expensive enemy of tomorrow?

BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN

■ People in Glass S&Ls

Charles Keating Jr. is a political pervert. Best known as the financier behind the infamous Lincoln Savings and Loan Association, which collapsed and stuck taxpayers with a \$2 billion bailout tab, Keating has made headlines recently because of his sizable political contributions to several senators who subsequently intervened on Lincoln's behalf with Federal banking examiners. Asked if his gifts to the politicians prompted their action, Keating replied, "I certainly hope so." The absence of shame in molesting government was striking for a founder of a group called Citizens for Decency Through Law. But C.D.L. is not a "good government" organization. Its obsession is pornography. Keating, who swindled Lincoln depositors, has for years waged a strident campaign against money-grubbing pornographers. In 1970, as the lone Nixon appointee to the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, he assailed the panel's final report for proposing that the government not censor or restrict sexually explicit materials for adults. "An advocacy of moral anarchy!" cried Keating.

Years later Keating, busy with his S&L scam, still found the time to sic C.D.L. on dial-a-porn services and convenience stores that sell *Penthouse* and *Playboy*, and to send out direct mail requests for the organization. In one such request from 1986 (and thanks to Group Research for sharing it) he implored:

This is no ordinary membership card which I enclose. It's a shining symbol of your love—your love of your country, your love of your children, your love of God. It carries a great history with it—the history of a nation's fight against the pit demons of pornography . . . Just take this card in your hand. Hold it. Feel the bond with me, and with the hundreds of thousands of decent, God-fearing people across the country who stand in unbending line against the forces of absolute evil.

Today every taxpayer can feel that bond with Keating.

■ Congressman, Take Hitler's Monetary Policy . . .

In the course of a normal business day, members of Congress will cater to all sorts of people—not just rich, hypocritical moralists. There are also political maniacs. The Liberty Lobby, for example, was respectfully welcomed when it asked to testify before Representative Stephen Neal's banking subcommittee on a measure to reform the Federal Reserve Board. The Liberty Lobby, a self-styled populist organization, advocates piercing the veil of secrecy shrouding the Fed. It has also taken a number of other stands. Its weekly sheet, *The Spotlight*, has published kind words about David Duke, former Klansman and now a Louisiana state legislator. Its founder, Willis Carto, is a leader of the Holocaust-is-a-fraud crowd. The organization itself has often been described as anti-Semitic and has lost the lawsuits it filed against journalists making that charge. Neal let none of this get in the way when the Liberty Lobby wanted to testify in favor of a bill he opposed.

The legislation, sponsored by Representatives Byron

Dorgan and Lee Hamilton, contains a number of provisions to make some operations of the Fed less secretive. Ralph Nader's Public Citizen, for one, supports the measure. But Nader's people also criticized the subcommittee for helping the Liberty Lobby appear legitimate. Not a soul in Congress could be found to echo their complaint. Now imagine the uproar that would ensue if some representative acceded to a request from Louis Farrakhan to testify on a drug bill.

■ Scrutiny and the Bounty

Legislators are churning out proposals for prosecuting the War on Drugs. Representative Dick Schulze's Bounty Hunter Act would reward citizens who turn in drug traffickers with 50 percent of the value of the assets forfeited by the dealer to law enforcement officials. Not only could this help drug entrepreneurs get rich by squealing on rivals; it would also make less money available to law enforcement agencies, which now direct seized assets back into their own budgets.

Representative Dana Rohrabacher is haunted by the prospect of drug use on Capitol Hill. He has introduced a bill that would let legislators use official funds to test their staffs for drugs. He's right to note the hypocrisy of a Congress that requires some testing in the public sector and encourages it in the private sector but then refuses to submit itself to such invasions. Rohrabacher is worried that staff members, who do the real work in Congress, are drawing up legislation while under the influence. Well, that would be one explanation . . .

■ Calculating an End to Poverty

The most effective war on drugs would be a war on poverty. And the Census Bureau has found a way to reduce the number of poor people. Census data for 1988 show that 31.9 million Americans—13.1 percent of the population—fell below the poverty line of \$9,435 for a family of three. But the bureau also introduced an "alternative poverty line" of \$8,580, based on a different measure of the consumer price index. Using this formula, the Census Bureau was able to jettison 3.6 million poor people. The Joint Economic Committee of Congress notes that a change in the consumer price index is not unreasonable, but that this is not the only factor that should be modified in determining the poverty level. Updating the assessments of household consumption needs, the committee says, would almost double the poverty rate, to 24 percent.

All this abstract number crunching is not without real significance. As the nongovernmental Center on Budget and Policy Priorities points out, the White House has the authority to set the poverty line. If it were to make the alternative poverty line the official measurement, the poor would face substantial cutbacks in food stamps, free school meals, Head Start and Medicaid. Members of Congress should be on the alert for such a move—that is, when they are not busy worrying about how to help the Charles Keatings or who should have to pee into a cup.

ARTICLES.

■ FOUNDATIONS AND THE CHARTER

Making New York City Safe for Plutocracy

ROBERT FITCH

The morning after Election Day, New York City and Ed Koch seemed finally to have kicked twelve years of co-dependence. A real rainbow of liberal white, Latino, African-American, women and gay voters joined with municipal unions and longtime community activists to give David Dinkins a slim majority. Voters also approved the sweeping reform of city government proposed by the Charter Revision Commission, which assigned itself the task of getting rid of the powerful Board of Estimate. Dinkins is expected to bring many progressive Democrats into his administration. But it is worrisome that he has named Koch's former Deputy Mayor, Nathan Leventhal, to head his transition team and put Koch's financial adviser, Felix Rohatyn, to work reassembling the bad old brains from the city's days of fiscal crisis. Worse yet, whichever way Dinkins turns, he will have to contend with the increased power of the real estate, financial and philanthropic interests that stood behind Koch—which the voters unwittingly enhanced when they approved the new city charter.

Using the simple lawyer's technique of drowning everything in paper, the commission's quarter-million-word proposal stripped all the power from the officials who sit on the Board of Estimate: the five borough presidents and the two citywide rivals of the mayor, the City Council president and the comptroller. Rather than increasing democratic control of the city's affairs, it redistributed the power to a condominium of the mayor and the Speaker of the City Council.

This quiet coup could not have been brought off without the sanctifying work of the commission's "good government" phalanx of foundation and nonprofit directors and Catholic Church executives, who wrote their institutional interests right into the charter in a pure power grab for city-owned land and human services contracts. What pushes the significance of New York's charter story beyond the borders of the city itself is the way the political agenda of the newly empowered New York-based foundations meshes so tightly with the longstanding interests of the real estate and financial community. It shows how, working behind the facade of expanding minority representation, it is possible to tighten the circle of a city's power brokers ever more narrowly.

Robert Fitch, who has taught metropolitan studies at New York University, is a freelance writer.

How the mayor and the City Council Speaker wound up holding all the power, how the foundations and nonprofits got dealt in, how the commission was assembled and how its chair, Frederick A.O. Schwarz Jr., toy store heir and plenipotentiary of the permanent government, dominated the charter revision process are all stories that somehow escaped the attention of the city's four major daily newspapers.

The Players: Plutocrats and Kleptocrats

Historically, New York City politics can be understood as an interminable kendo contest between the plutocrats and the kleptocrats: on one side the real estate and financial interests; on the other the Democratic Party machines, once centered in Tammany Hall but now decentralized in autonomous organizations in the Bronx, Queens, Staten Island, Brooklyn and upper Manhattan. The goal of the kleptocrats is to sell (discreetly, of course) franchises, contracts and gentrification rights to the plutocrats for as high a price as possible until retirement or incarceration, whichever comes first. To stay in the contest, however, the kleptocrats must maintain their power base in the outer boroughs and be at least somewhat responsive to neighborhood concerns on some occasions. Greenwich Village Tammany chieftain Carmine De Sapio may have been mob boss Frank Costello's favorite district leader, but he helped stop David Rockefeller and Robert Moses from driving the downtown Lower Manhattan Expressway through Washington Square Park. All this explains the political ideal of the Democratic Party machine: decentralization and plenty of patronage to keep the machine's engine oiled.

By contrast, when the plutocrats go after contracts and franchises, when they seek to gentrify neighborhoods and locate toxic waste dumps in other people's backyards, they prefer to deal with one politico. This person must not be a parochial nimby-pamby; that is, someone who is too responsive to the not-in-my-backyard interests of constituents in non-elite neighborhoods of the far-flung outer boroughs. He or she must have the interests of "the whole" at heart: real estate values in Manhattan's central business district. The plutocrats' twin governmental ideals have therefore been a weak legislature and centralization of power in the hands of a strong mayor. After decades of maneuvering over the distribution of city power, with the new charter the plutocrats have won a decisive victory over the kleptocrats.

In New York major revisions of municipal government recur about every fifteen years—paralleling the locust cycle. The larval stage of this one began eight years ago when Richard Emery, an attorney for the New York Civil Liberties Union, brought suit against the Board of Estimate, charging that it gave equal power to the borough presidents from Staten Island and Brooklyn, though the latter has six times the former's population. As the suit made its way to the Supreme Court, the city's defense was presented—with uncharacteristic lack of energy—by Koch's corporation counsel, F.A.O. Schwarz, who later headed the Charter Revision Commission.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's decision last March, the fifteen-member Schwarz commission carpentered a whole new city government in less than six months. The commission said that legal pressures forced it to put the charter on the ballot in this year's November 7 mayoral election. Critics charged that the commission's haste forestalled an effective citywide debate. Discussion of the 400 single-spaced pages of proposals was squeezed into four months, although the commission had been around for nearly three years in various incarnations. The actual time allowed for debate was even less: Most of the document was thrown together in two weeks to meet Schwarz's August 2 deadline. When Mayor Koch or *The New York Times* signaled disapproval of this or that proposed section, Schwarz and his staff were forced to stay up all night removing or revising the offending passages. Schwarz set such a fast pace that some commissioners complained that they had no chance to read what they were voting on. The few ordinary citizens who plowed through the commission's bland and inaccurate summary of the finished documents were led to believe that by abolishing the Board of Estimate they were affirming the "one person, one vote" principle, fairer representation for minorities and increased citizen access to city government.

Urban Realpolitik

The savviest progressive politicians in the city knew that the charter process would be almost impossible to stop and swung behind it. But they also found merit in many of the proposals. Newly elected Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger argued that voters should look at the good things the commission has produced: The City Council has been expanded from thirty-five to fifty-one members. More seats would mean more minority representatives from newly created districts. Besides, with all its flaws, the charter was the best that could be hoped for under the circumstances. "This document doesn't do everything," Messinger acknowledged in a debate sponsored by *The Village Voice*, "but it begins a new competition of interests. It protects the rights of minorities. It gives the Council new opportunities. Whether the Council members seize the opportunities that are available to them is going to depend on who the Council members are, and who they are is dependent on voting."

Progressives who opposed the charter, however, believed that it diminished the ability of grass-roots organizations and community groups to influence the governmental process. The new City Council, they charged, has few real powers, however representative it may become.

In fact, by abolishing the Board of Estimate, the new charter hammers New York City's political structure into realignment with its economic base in the Manhattan central business district. Under it, the mayor or his or her appointees will decide who gets the city's \$3 billion in no-bid contracts, who is to be awarded city concessions, who gets city-owned land, who can acquire lucrative cable television franchises—all without having to perform the elaborate *pas de huit* of compromise and conciliation with the five borough presidents, the comptroller and the City Council president. Instead, politics will become a *pas de deux* between the

mayor and the Speaker of the City Council.

The commission's spokespersons claim to have transferred most of the board's powers to the expanded City Council. This claim was demolished in a brief filed with the Justice Department, which is overseeing the reapportionment of Council seats, by Leslie Lowe, an attorney for the Coalition of African Americans, Asian Americans and Latinos for a Just City Government. Lowe identified the board's forty basic powers over capital projects, disposition of city property, environmental review, land use and procurement. She showed that only five of these had completely devolved on the City Council. The remaining ones are either shared by the Council and the mayor or rerouted to the mayor through a maze of commissions, boards and committees, whose members are appointed by the mayor and will replace elected officials.

Essentially, despite acquiring its own budget office and added powers over the city budget, the Council will remain a sapless branch, a part-time body with no power to award contracts and scant control over land use—the key points of leverage in urban power dynamics. The Council can only take jurisdiction over land-use questions through a complex process in which it is overshadowed by an all-powerful City Planning Commission dominated by the mayor's appointees. To "call up" a disapproved project for review, the Council must vote on planning commission actions within a narrow time limit or they go into effect automatically.

What few independent powers the Council has gained will be orchestrated by its Speaker, Queens boss and Council majority leader Peter Vallone, through his control of PAC funds, committee assignments and cash disbursements to Council members given in lieu of expenses (known as "lulus"). Vallone, a commercial landlord, was picked to head the Council in 1985 by Queens County leader Donald Manes and Bronx County leader Stanley Friedman, who are now, respectively, dead by suicide and in jail.

The commission's claim that minorities will hold proportionately more seats on an expanded City Council than they do on the present body is also dubious. The results of computer-generated projections on which that claim is based were never made public, so it is impossible to assess it.

Perhaps the most troubling feature of the charter is its handling of contracts and franchises. In New York City, since the mid-1970s, there has been a trend toward replacing unionized city workers with workers on welfare. There has even been a tendency to replace unionized workers receiving a paycheck with prisoners or detainees getting no check at all. For example, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development has employed hundreds of convicts on various construction sites under the supervision of the Vera Institute of Justice's Court Employment Project. Until now, however, many legal obstacles slowed the growth of this kind of contracting. The most important of these was the requirement that all contracts over \$10,000 be approved in a public forum by the Board of Estimate. The new charter raises the public hearing threshold to \$10 million for the vast majority of contracts. It also changes the venue of the hearing to the agency that wants to let the contract.

Finally, under the old charter, agencies had to justify con-

tracting out. The new charter reverses that policy in a blatant tilt toward the nonprofits. It encourages contracting out "where the use of procurement . . . strengthen[s] the relationships between non-profit and charitable organizations and the communities where services are to be provided." If one definition of urban power consists in being able to give priority to your own interests in the city's constitution, the nonprofits have become quite powerful indeed. Unlike the many labor, neighborhood and environmental groups that petitioned the Schwarz commission, they weren't on the outside rattling tin cups; they were on the inside laying down the law. How did they acquire their clout? What did they want? More important, how did their agenda mesh with the goals of the plutocrats?

'Corrective Capitalism'

New York serves, to an extent not widely appreciated, as the main testing ground for the big activist foundations located in the city. It is the Los Alamos of social policy: the place where ideas are not only developed in the glass tower think tanks on Park Avenue but tested in the glass-strewn streets of the outer-borough ghettos. Good intentions are not the issue. By doling out billions in tax-exempt wealth, the corporate, family and bank-created foundations establish the higher policy discourse. They decide what social policy initiatives will have prestige and credibility, and they shape the form of much political activism, since, increasingly, only that which is fundable tends to be doable. Indeed, they have created a whole multibillion-dollar nonprofit sector in competition with the public sector. But the public has no review or control of the foundations, even though ultimately it is the tax-paying public that subsidizes these experiments.

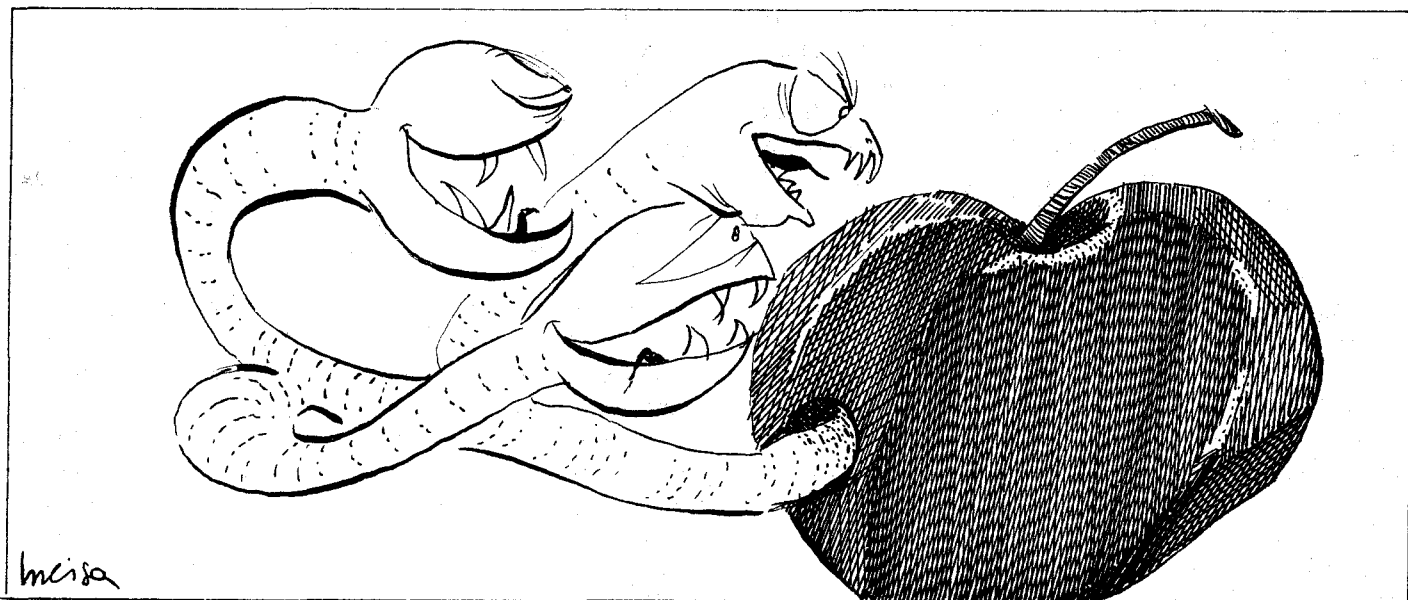
With all their money, monographs and immunity from public review, the foundations still need an experimental venue. And New York City's government—especially under Ed Koch—has been a handy place. After Donald Manes's suicide and U.S. District Attorney Rudolph Giuliani's indictments of city officials in the Parking Violations Bureau scandals, Koch's machine connections became politically

dangerous. So he began to turn regularly to the much more respectable foundations for ideas, particularly the Ford Foundation, whose \$250 million in yearly grants make it the world's largest. Since Franklin Thomas became its president, Ford has devoted an increasing share of its philanthropy to urban affairs, principally criminal justice, welfare reform and community development.

Ford's wide-ranging urban agenda includes such notions as "corrective capitalism"—the gentrification of the inner city through the creation of nonprofit community development corporations—and "workfare," which it pursues through nonprofit corporations like the Manpower Research and Development Corporation and the Wildcat Corporation. In criminal justice reform, its goal is cost containment, and the vehicle for the foundation's initiatives is the Vera Institute of Justice, headed by the ubiquitous Schwarz. By placing convicts and detainees who don't endanger the society "in the community," costly jail space can be saved for those who are a threat. The model here is the community mental health movement, which began releasing the patients of state mental hospitals onto the streets of New York in the early 1970s.

Ford's influence on city agencies and policies began in force in 1968. In lieu of paying taxes on its 43rd Street headquarters, the foundation was allowed by the Lindsay administration to set up something called the Fund for the City of New York, which functions as the bank for nonprofits and a prime source of policy ideas. It also helped found a potent lobby, the Non-Profit Coordinating Committee. Richard Ravitch, who was head of the Charter Revision Commission from 1986 to 1987, served as a board member of the fund. Schwarz headed the fund both prior to and after serving as the city's top lawyer. Interestingly, he has ties with Ford dating back to 1965, when he represented the foundation as an attorney with the Cravath, Swain & Moore law firm.

To succeed in implementing their urban agenda, foundations must not only get city officials to adopt their ideas; they must also get the mayor to appoint their people to posts



ILLUSTRATIONS BY MONICA INCISA

in city government. The untold story of the Koch administration is the extent to which Ford and its circle of foundations and nonprofit corporations had so many of their key employees running city agencies. Herb Sturz best illustrates the curriculum vitae of the new nonprofit mandarin. In 1961 he became president of the Vera Institute, where, according to Ken Auletta in *The Underclass*, he later helped invent workfare. When he was chosen by Koch to head the City Planning Commission, the celebration was held at the Ford Foundation and attended by many of Koch's Ford crossovers. After his tour of duty in City Planning, it was on to *The New York Times* editorial board. Finally, this year Sturz took the next logical step in his public-service career by becoming chief of Dreyfuss Realty.

Other Koch officials in the Ford orbit have included First Deputy Mayor for Human Services Stanley Brezenoff, from Ford; Police Commissioner Benjamin Ward, from Vera; and head of the Human Resources Administration William Grinker, the first president of the Manpower Research and Development Corporation. As city officials, they were in a position to influence social welfare, criminal justice and community development policy to the benefit of their former institutions.

One important nexus of the foundations' and developers' agendas is property taxes. Every time a city worker is replaced by a Vera-sponsored convict or a Wildcat-provided welfare recipient, the city saves on pension costs, wages and benefits. Each dollar saved in expenditure is a dollar saved in taxes. And each dollar saved in taxes, other things being equal, increases real estate values proportionately. At the same time, the proliferation of these nonprofit contracts creates a pool of docile workers with no job security and no rights. This widening pool serves as a counterweight to the municipal unions' bargaining power.

Likewise, in the struggle over New York's city-owned land, the foundation-sponsored community development corporations—nonprofit entrepreneurs that raise funds for housing or industrial projects—fight on the side of plutocracy, competing for land with groups interested in putting up low-cost, mass-produced housing. Those groups, such as the church coalitions in east Brooklyn and the South Bronx, can turn out thousands of demonstrators to put pressure on outer borough officials and representatives. Under the new charter, the City Council will have no power even to review the transfer of city-owned land to nonprofit

organizations that develop "low-income" housing—no dollar definition is offered. This will mean that vast swaths of the South Bronx or central Brooklyn can be transferred to David Rockefeller's Partnership for Housing, or any one of a number of bank- or foundation-sponsored nonprofit community development corporations, which build housing for fewer, relatively more affluent people. And since no local elected officials will have a say, demonstrators will have no one to pressure. It is this broad vision that united the plutocrats and the charter commissioners, a majority of whom came from foundations or nonprofits themselves.

F.A.O. Schwarz's Toy

The process of selecting the Charter Revision Commission's fifteen members illustrates how the new balance of city power was achieved. The five borough presidents provided a list from which Koch chose five names. The Mayor himself got to appoint five others. And the City Council leadership submitted a list from which Koch would cull the remaining five. When Schwarz got a call from Koch to chair the commission, he accepted "under two conditions," Schwarz told me. "First [Koch] had to call three people and ask them if they thought I could be fair: The first was [then-Manhattan Borough President] David Dinkins, the second was [Queens Borough President] Claire Schulman and the third was Peter Vallone." Schwarz accurately saw these three as the city's remaining machine power brokers. He also insisted on the right to name three new members of the commission to replace others who had resigned.

Schwarz became not just the commission's chair but its boss. He controlled the staff, dominated the proceedings and was never outvoted on a single issue. Furthermore, the nonprofits and foundations acquired a built-in majority, since there were nine commissioners with ties to the Fund for the City of New York, Vera, Wildcat, the Legal Aid Society, the New York Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, the Police Foundation, the New York Community Trust, the Ford-funded Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and two from the Catholic Church. And of the minority commissioners, five of six worked for organizations that depended to some degree on Koch for city contracts.

Toward a Democratic New York?

The charter thus created a governmental structure that is even less democratic and more open to corruption than its predecessor. There remains a remote chance that the U.S. Justice Department may rule favorably on the minority coalition's plea to set aside the results of the November 7 charter approval. And Mayor Dinkins may follow through on his pledge to appoint a committee to modify some of the features of the new charter. But New Yorkers would do well to establish their own agenda to counter the foundation-real estate-mayoral triumvirate now holding power in their city. In New York it is now harder to vote, harder for nonmachine candidates to get on the ballot and harder for minority parties to gain representation in proportion to their votes than in such relative bastions of democracy as Budapest, Moscow and Warsaw.

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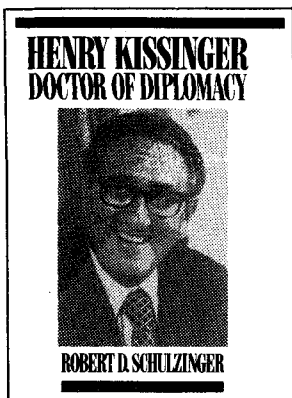
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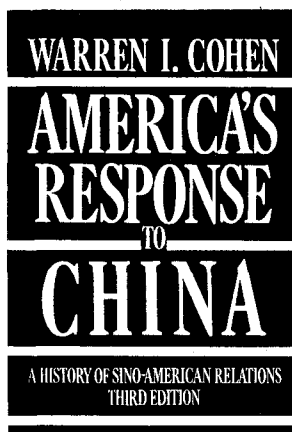
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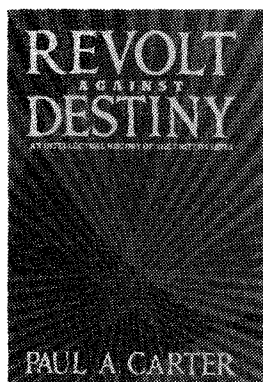
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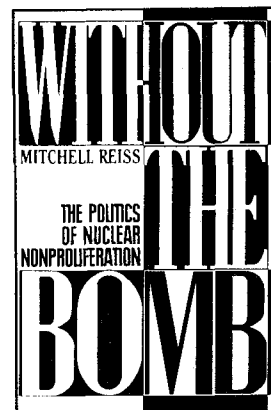
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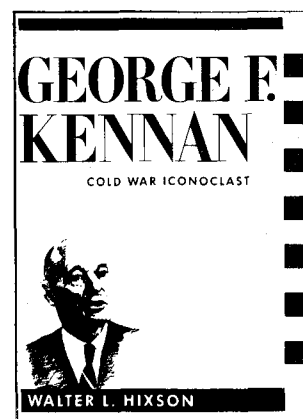


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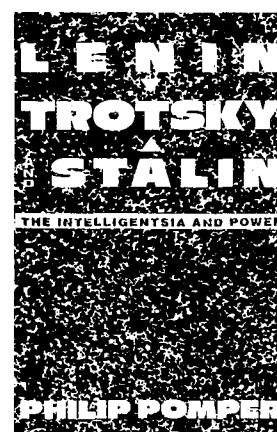
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■ BLACKS CHALLENGE THE I.A.F.F.

Fighting the Fires of Racism

PAUL ROCKWELL

When Lane Kirkland, president of the A.F.L.-C.I.O., spoke at a civil rights march in Washington last August, he sounded almost like Jesse Jackson. "We have fought too long and hard to turn back now," Kirkland said, as he reiterated the labor federation's commitment to affirmative action for minorities and women. That verbal commitment, however, is being put severely to the test in the firefighting service throughout the United States.

The International Association of Fire Fighters, an A.F.L.-C.I.O. union with a membership of 177,000 men and women, is on a crusade against affirmative action. Almost all the consent decrees established from 1975 to 1985 and designed to integrate fire departments by race and sex are now under attack. No organization in the United States has activated more "reverse discrimination" suits than the I.A.F.F. It was the union that helped finance the litigation for white firefighters in Birmingham, Alabama, an action that led to the Supreme Court's stunning decision in *Martin v. Wilks* on June 12, opening court-approved consent decrees to challenge. After the Rehnquist Five's declaration of open season on affirmative action, the I.A.F.F. Executive Board sent out a directional memorandum encouraging its white-run locals to try to overturn consent decrees in their respective cities. It is now common practice for the I.A.F.F. to collect dues from its membership, including minorities, to finance lawsuits and campaigns against minority programs.

Paul Rockwell, formerly an assistant professor of philosophy at Midwestern University in Texas, is a writer living in the San Francisco Bay area.

The union's assault on African-Americans has become especially ugly in the past few years. When black firefighters were elected in 1988 to the East Cleveland Executive Board, the International's president, John Gannon, simply declared the outcome "null and void." There are approximately 13,000 black firefighters in the United States, but not one African-American is on the national Executive Board of the I.A.F.F. Moreover, the white, male-run union is directly implicated in racial and sex-based hostilities in Miami, Boston, Toledo, San Francisco, Oakland—in fire departments in every region of the country.

§ *Miami.* There were 700 employees in the Miami Fire Department in 1964, high tide for the civil rights movement. In 1965 the city hired its first black firefighter. It took two more years to hire the second. Six years later the department brought in a third. At that rate it would have taken more than a century to desegregate firefighting in Miami. The period from 1965 to 1975 was the decade of voluntary desegregation in most institutions, but by the mid-1970s it was obvious that without specific goals, timetables and quotas, the white old-boy network would never be dismantled.

Only after the International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters (I.A.B.P.F.F.) organized a local coalition, picketed City Hall and waged a series of battles in the courts did things begin to change in Miami. After a thorough investigation in 1977 a Federal District Court concluded that for nearly five decades the city of Miami had systematically excluded blacks and other minority groups from employment and advancement. The courts subsequently approved a consent decree that required the city to hire blacks, Latinos and women proportionate to their number in the general population.

But the price of progress in America is high for African-Americans. In Miami the black recruits were constantly watched, harassed and reminded that their jobs depended on the mercy of white men. Their own union, I.A.F.F. Local 587, made a living hell for the new firefighters, who became objects of racial slurs, jokes and physical threats. In 1986 the black firefighters association made the record of discrimination public, forcing the city to commission an investigation which a year later concluded that "racial and gender-based discriminatory practices and conduct are systemic within the Fire, Rescue, and Inspection Services."

The I.A.F.F. refused to accept reforms. Instead it retaliated. All sixty-two of Miami's black firefighters were expelled starting in May 1988. After having paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in dues, black firefighters lost their insurance, health benefits and bargaining rights. In his letter of dismissal, Don Teems, president of Local 587, stated that "the nature of the mis-conduct is the acquiring and continuing membership in the Professional Black Fire-Fighters Association." The implication was that the I.A.B.P.F.F., to which the majority of black firefighters in the country belong, is a rival labor union. It is not, any more than the N.A.A.C.P., A.C.L.U. or NOW are labor organizations. Romeo Spaulding, the association's president, describes the group, which formed in 1970, as a "fraternal organization committed to the recruitment, retention and promotion of

women and minorities." Local chapters sponsor softball teams, give fire-prevention classes, organize programs to cut down false alarms in the inner cities and conduct voter registration drives. The unprecedented mass expulsion in Miami, which was backed by the International leadership, was an attack not only on minorities but on the political rights of all union members. In essence the union has made opposition to affirmative action a condition of safe membership.

§ *Boston*. Here the situation is particularly bizarre. Consider the case of the affirmative-action impostors, the Malones.

It is hardly news when two fair-haired, fair-complexioned brothers with Irish names are found in the Boston Fire Department, a city full of O'Reillys, Beehans and McClanahans. But the Malone brothers, identical twins, were kind of special. They got into the Fire Department through affirmative action, under a consent decree that provided for the recruitment of women, Latinos and blacks. Approximately 22 percent of the Boston population is black, compared with 15 percent of the Fire Department. There are no black district chiefs or department chiefs, and in the entire force there are only five women. The Malones failed to pass their first Civil Service firefighting test in 1975, but they reapplied in 1977 and this time listed their race as black.

The impostors worked for ten years in the department before their scam was uncovered. The appearance of the Malones on a public list of black applicants for promotion proved too embarrassing for the Fire Department supervisors. The Boston Black Professional Fire Fighters Association called for a formal investigation, which found a number of other whites who had misused affirmative action by identifying themselves as members of a minority group. During the investigation two white firefighters who had classified themselves as Hispanic resigned. Eventually the Malones were kicked off the force, but not without a long fight in court.

The Malone case goes beyond two individuals, beyond the other whites who claimed to be Latinos. The issue is the complicity of the I.A.F.F. and city officials in subverting affirmative action. As City Councilor Bruce Bolling asked,

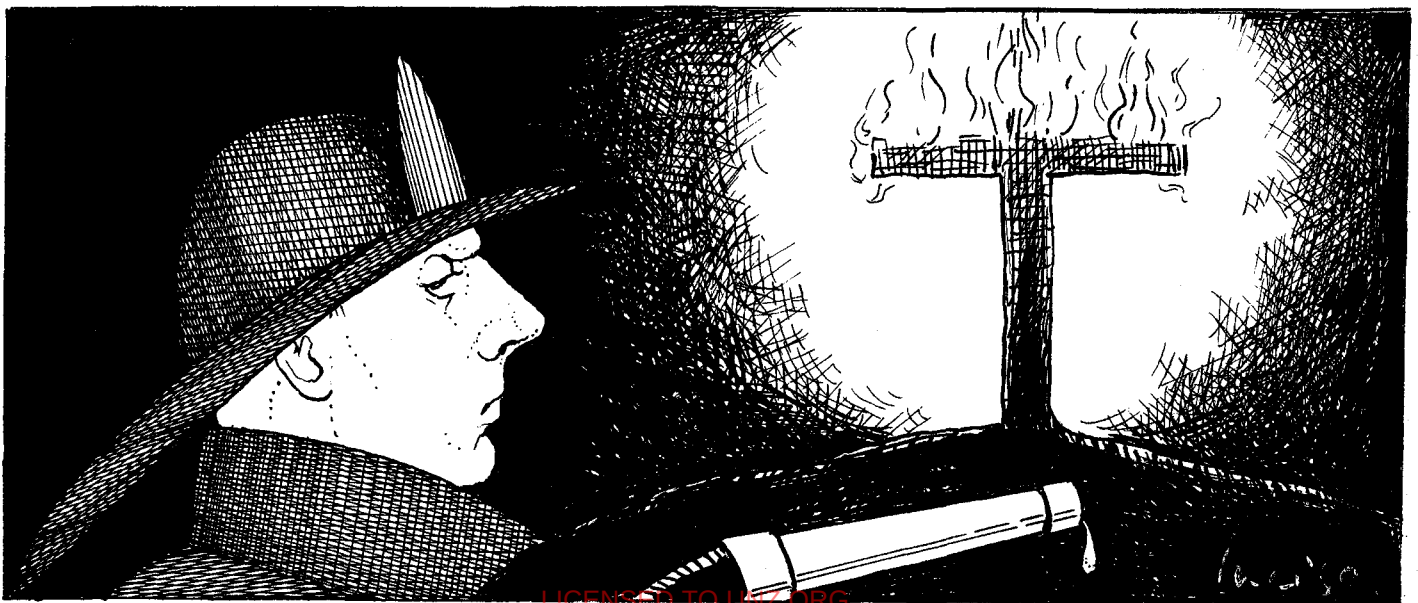
"How could twins with Irish names, Caucasian features and no black identification from any perspective get into the force and stay on without collusion?" Indeed, it had been common knowledge among white firefighters—even a source of gleeful jokes—that the Malones had effectively disrupted the operation of affirmative action in Boston. When the case became public, the I.A.F.F. leadership refused to denounce this sabotage. Members of Local 718 actually took up a collection to assist the Malones in legal defense. And after the two were dismissed, the Local launched a reverse discrimination suit against Boston minority firefighters.

§ *Toledo*. In March of this year a macho fire chief, William Winkle, was given a twenty-day suspension, a minor penalty, after making lewd remarks about a female Civil Service worker. During a closed meeting of officers Winkle had spelled out her telephone number: "245CUNT."

Winkle was a known bigot, with a record of vilifying African-Americans, Jews and women throughout his rise in the ranks from lieutenant in 1971 to fire chief in 1980. In 1982 the Toledo City Manager, David Boston, published an internal report cataloguing Winkle's vile behavior. At one time, it recorded, Winkle had stated his admiration for Adolf Hitler, saying "The only mistake he made was not throwing niggers in the oven too." In response to a television news story, he had once yelled, "Yeah, nigger, the only rights you got is a three-quarter-inch Manila hemp rope."

Winkle was also caught pressuring subordinates to fire a black firefighter. His personnel department once altered records of white applicants to help move them ahead of minority candidates on the hiring list. Double standards have been common practice under his reign. When a black female firefighter informed her division chief she was pregnant, she was sent home without pay, forced to exhaust her vacation and sick leave. On the other hand, a pregnant white firefighter who was on probation was transferred to a desk, given light duties and received pay while on maternity leave.

Although City Manager Boston read the dossier on Winkle, he refused to take action against him and even tried to soften the criticism. In a note attached to the internal



report, Boston wrote: "Several allegations of racial bias or attitude were determined to have in fact taken place. . . . While I do not approve or condone such attitude or behavior, it should be understood that at that period of time such comments were not uncommon within the fire division." The Toledo Fire Chiefs Association, which represents twenty-one battalion and deputy chiefs, also refused to rebuke Winkle, taking a "neutral" stance. For its part, I.A.F.F. Local 92 never protested Winkle's blatant abuse of the union's membership, thereby abetting the harassment of minorities and women. Today the white supremacist Winkle continues to head the Toledo Fire Department.

The Glass City Black Brothers United, a chapter of the I.A.B.P.F.F., recently formed a coalition with the participation of the Y.W.C.A., NOW and the N.A.A.C.P. The coalition is putting pressure on the City Council to fire Winkle. LeRoy Williams, president of the N.A.A.C.P.'s Toledo branch, said, "We're not going to support with tax dollars racist and sexist behavior by someone who is unresponsive to the public trust." The I.A.F.F., which curried favor with Winkle throughout the years that he rose to power, has kept its distance from the popular coalition. Jim Dugan, president of Local 92, admitted that Winkle had caused problems for the union but just kept saying, "He was an extremely good firefighter."

§ *San Francisco.* When the first African-American entered the city's Fire Department in 1955, he found feces in his bed. Last year two firefighters, one black and one Asian-American, found swastikas on their desks. According to Greg Brooks, a writer for the *Sun Reporter*, Fred Postel, a white firefighter who trained minorities and women, was roughed up by his fellow workers for helping "the niggers and women into the department." Now thirty-four black firefighters are seeking damages totaling \$7 million for years of racial harassment.

In 1987 the editors of I.A.F.F. Local 798's newsletter were caught perpetrating "white-outs" of blacks in photographs of meritorious firefighters. In one case the image of Charles Johnson had been deleted from the published photo, and the omission was discovered only because the I.A.F.F. censors had failed to cut out his legs. White-outs and other forms of disrespect are commonplace in firefighting journals. The I.A.F.F.'s paper, *International Fire Fighter*, looks

like a whites-only paper. In the June-July 1989 issue there is not a single African-American or anyone of discernible color among seventy individuals photographed.

§ *Oakland.* Across the bay from San Francisco there are currently 472 uniformed firefighters in the department. Latinos make up less than 3 percent, women less than 2 percent. In a city that is 47 percent African-American, only 25 percent of the force is black. The department resembles a baseball team managed by Al Campanis: Of forty-five captains, only eight are black; there are no black battalion chiefs, and only one black is an assistant chief. Nine firefighters are women, and there is one female lieutenant on the entire force. While the majority of black firefighters live in the city that they serve, the entire Local leadership commutes into Oakland from distant, predominantly white areas of Marin and Contra Costa counties.

In October, I.A.F.F. Local 55 filed a reverse discrimination lawsuit to stop Oakland from hiring thirty-five women from the current eligibility lists. The union entered the suit on behalf of applicants who are not members of the union. Richard Logan, indefatigable president of the Oakland Black Fire Fighters Association, denounced the Local leadership for misuse of union funds. "Local 55," he said, "is representing white males who are not even members of our union over our own dues-paying members, violating union bylaws." Members of the Oakland Black Fire Fighters, the Asian Law Caucus, Filipinos for Affirmative Action, California Women in Fire Suppression, United Public Employees/S.E.I.U. Local 790 and the Oakland-Berkeley Rainbow Coalition recently met to consider forming a community coalition in defense of affirmative action. East Bay trade unionists consider Local 55 a "fifth column" in labor ranks and are calling on the Central Labor Council of Alameda County to take a stand against I.A.F.F. policy.

In a recent interview with the *Oakland Tribune*, Local 55 president Steve Splendorio said he is eager to represent minorities, women and all members of his union. But many dispute his claim. At a press conference on October 9, Bonnie Cox, a white firefighter, said angrily: "Local 55 has done nothing to recruit and maintain women members. When women came on, Local 55 did not welcome us. They took a we'll-see-how-you-work-out attitude. It is very rare to see Asian or Hispanic or women firefighters in Oakland. You're an oddity in a city of minorities!"

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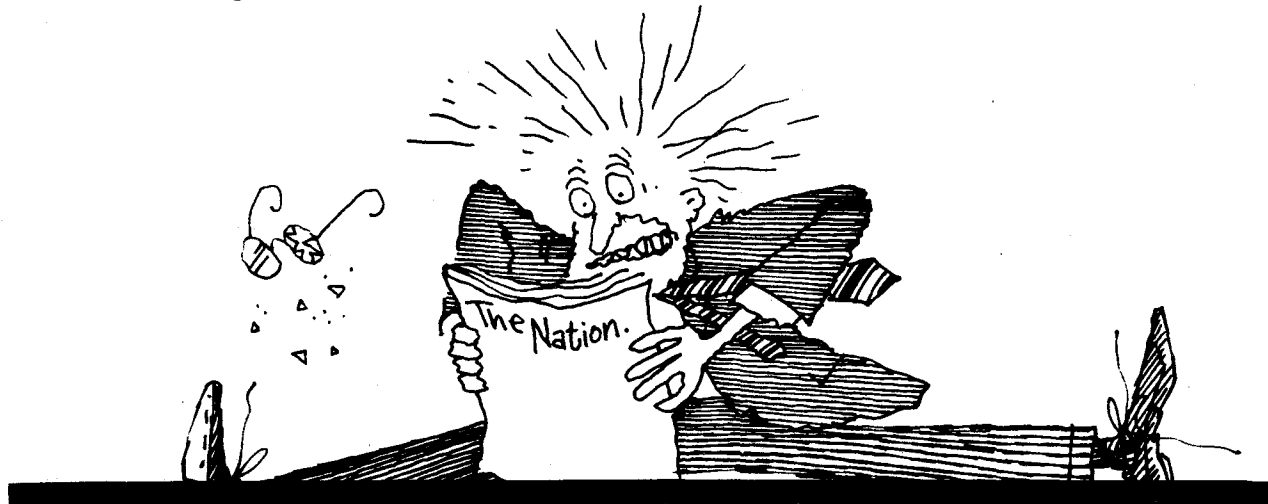
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What is taking place in Oakland is part of a pattern throughout the United States. Women and minorities are underrepresented in firefighting service, and while the minority populations of major cities are increasing, affirmative action goals are being reduced or canceled. Many fire departments in the country might be fully integrated today if it were not for the union's obstruction in the recruitment and promotion of minorities. To be sure, the I.A.F.F. is concerned about its image and is eager to retain its position within the A.F.L.-C.I.O. In the wake of mounting criticism from rank-and-file firefighters, the International organized civil rights conferences in 1987 and 1988. The Executive Board invited well-known speakers from outside the fire

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service but deliberately excluded the largest, most active minority organization in firefighting, the International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters.

The leaders of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. are fully aware of the racist practices of the I.A.F.F. Two years ago Clarence Williams, then president of the black firefighters' association, wrote Lane Kirkland: "Most Blacks in America have given strong and almost unconditional support to the labor movement, its issues and candidates. . . . However, many of the labor unions that we support with our membership, money, votes, personal time and commitment are guilty of discrimination and non-representation. Our members find it unacceptable to be instrumental in perpetuating their own suppression. . . . Blacks, minorities and women who are already union members expect the AFL-CIO to advocate on their behalf when their local union does not."

What is the choice for the A.F.L.-C.I.O.? The I.A.F.F.'s record makes it plain. The presence of a "white brotherhood" in the federation degrades the entire labor movement. The mass firing of black members from Local 587 in Miami, the nullification of elections that produce minority winners, the collection of union dues to finance lawsuits against minority programs, the long record of collusion with city administrations to obstruct affirmative action—these are legitimate grounds to expel the International Association of Fire Fighters from the biggest labor federation in America. □

Europe

(Continued From Front Cover)

which the Allies determined the postwar frontiers of Europe. In February 1945, in the former summer residence of the czar, Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin carved out their spheres of influence. It took three more years and a series of events—Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech in Fulton, Missouri; the Truman Doctrine; the Marshall Plan; the Prague coup; and the blockade of Berlin—for the wartime alliance to be frozen into the cold war and for the two halves of Europe to be turned into hostile blocs. But the spheres of influence were drawn up at Yalta, and it is the dismantling of this agreement that is now on the political agenda.

Western political leaders sound strangely reserved in their hour of triumph, when the conflict at least gives the impression of being resolved in their favor. Their reticence is not entirely due to the establishment's instinctive dislike of popular interference with its plans and timetables; the political awakening of the people always sets a bad precedent. Neither can it be fully explained by the fact that the spokespersons of the East German opposition, especially those of New Forum, do not share the reverence for capitalism displayed by many of their Hungarian or Polish colleagues [see Günter Minnerup, "Opening Up a New

Europe?" December 4]. Western rulers are genuinely perturbed by the very prospect of change. For West Germany's European partners, it spells two rather contradictory threats: first, that the Federal Republic, lured by the attractions of the East, will desert or subvert the Common Market; second, that it will come to dominate the European Community completely after it is strengthened still further by some form of German reunification. President Bush faces the specter of rapid disarmament in Europe, the removal of U.S. troops, the dissolution of NATO and drastically reduced control over the Western alliance.

From Yalta to Malta

Stalin grabbed territory up to the Elbe to create a glacis and guarantee the security of the Soviet Union. He changed the social system in Eastern Europe as an afterthought and as additional insurance. The two nevertheless became linked: Eastern Europeans were not only forbidden to leave the Soviet bloc but also to change their own regimes, as the Czechoslovaks tragically discovered twenty-one years ago. In that sense, the Brezhnev Doctrine no longer exists: Gorbachev has no intention of interfering in his neighbors' domestic arrangements by force. The Polish example shows that if popular movements are controlled and include guarantees for Moscow—provided in this case by the presidency of Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski—the search for a different regime, even for capitalism, will be tolerated. Exit from the Warsaw Pact will not. It has been argued that a minor and strategically peripheral country such as Hungary might be allowed to become neutral. But there is no question of Poland or the German Democratic Republic leaving the Warsaw Pact unless both treaty systems and blocs are dissolved. Since no change in the status of Germany can be carried out without the signature of the Soviet Union, one of the victorious Allied powers, the road to even the preliminary stages of German unity leads through the dissolution of NATO.

Bush is now faced with a dilemma. In a world that is no longer bipolar, how do the two superpowers establish their relations? Do they determine new ground rules to avoid dangerous conflict in the Third World, speed up disarmament, conventional as well as nuclear, and include in this context the gradual abolition of Europe's great divide, with the United States relying for its ultimate strategic victory on the progressive integration of the Soviet bloc into the capitalist world market? Or should the Americans slow down the process, assure Gorbachev that the question of German reunification will not be raised for years, and thus induce him to avoid the issue of dissolution? The snag is not only the crucial role that arms production plays in the Western economies, particularly the U.S. economy. It is also that Europe, and notably the Federal Republic, are now too strong to be treated merely as an object of negotiation.

Washington was originally the sponsor, almost the originator, of Western European integration, which it saw as an instrument for fighting Communist influence. More recently it has had second thoughts, since a Western Europe that coordinated its investments and pooled its resources

This is the first of a two-part series. Daniel Singer is The Nation's Europe correspondent.

threatened to become a dangerous economic rival. A more closely integrated Europe, however, appeared unlikely. As long as West Germany accepted the division of the world into two blocs and its own dependence on the U.S. nuclear umbrella, it could not act as a force for European federation. This was the sense in which the German "economic giant" was described as a "political dwarf." Today, when the deutsche mark dominates the European monetary system, West Germany has every opportunity to bring its political power up to the level of its economic might.

Deutschland Über Alles?

Although the question of German unity will not have to be faced in concrete terms for some time, it already overshadows European politics. The French, echoing François Mauriac, used to say they loved Germany so much they wanted two of them. On November 3, seated next to Chancellor Helmut Kohl, François Mitterrand proclaimed that he saw no objection to German unity and that the problem would probably be tackled in the next ten years. Skeptics at once pointed out that the French President was trading a vague promise for the future for an immediate tactical gain. The conclusion that Mitterrand drew from this argument was that Germany must be united before it can be more closely linked to Western Europe. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, speaking after the events in Berlin, tried to play down their dramatic importance and, pretending that nothing should be done to disturb Mikhail Gorbachev, pleaded for a slowdown on all fronts. The two leaders' tactics were transparent. With the unified market due in 1992, the members of the European Community are jockeying for position. Paris is in favor of rapid integration on monetary, social and political matters. London is against any rush. But it is Bonn that will ultimately decide the pace of European economic integration.

The French would also like to hamper Germany to some extent in its Eastern ventures by giving more control over aid for and investment in Eastern Europe to the European Community in Brussels. Everybody, however, is convinced

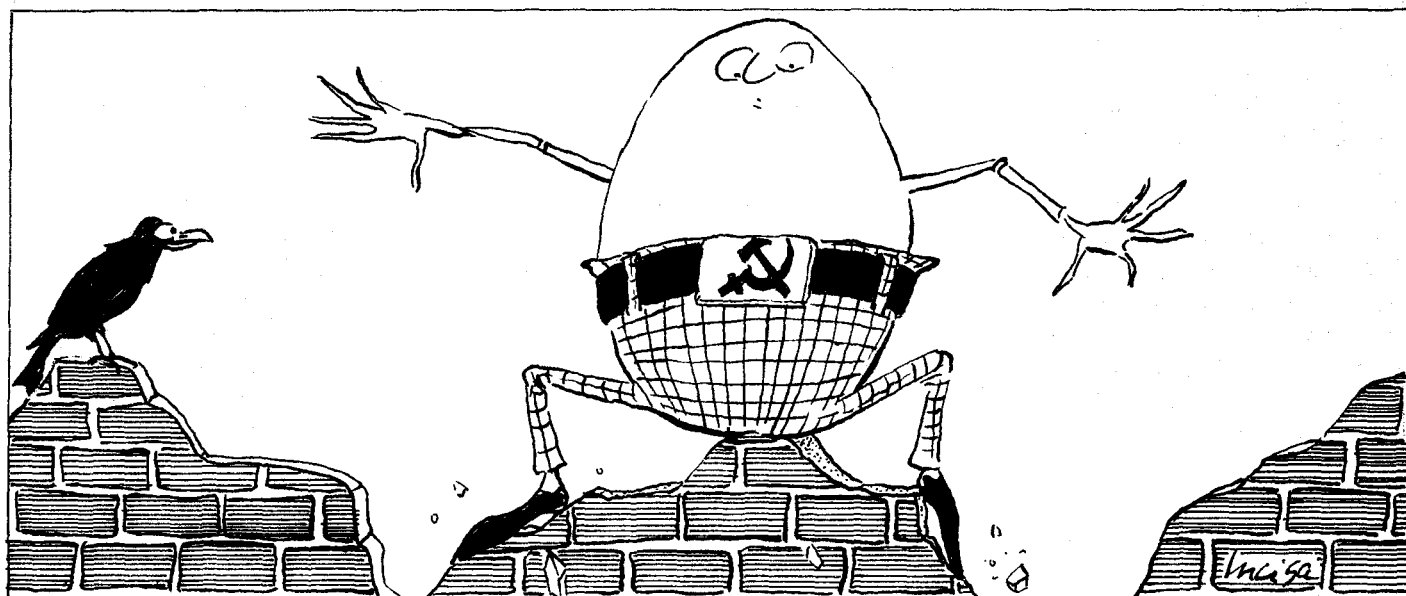
that the Federal Republic, with its financial resources and its highly efficient industrial sector, will outbid its partners in both Poland and Hungary, as well as the G.D.R. When its two halves are finally brought together, whatever the framework and state structure, Germany, with more than 80 million people, will still be the *primus* in Europe—only no longer *inter pares*. It will stand head and shoulders above its partners.

Is not this preoccupation with German power a remnant of the past, a product of conditioned reflexes? Undoubtedly the balance of forces in Europe is now altered, the economic and social conditions are radically different and any analogy with Nazism at this stage is absurd. Yet there are other reasons to worry. When a West German Chancellor traveling through Poland refuses to recognize the permanence of the Oder-Neisse frontier—the Polish-German border sanctioned at Yalta—in order to avoid antagonizing right-wingers at home, and when he lectures East Germans on the direction their economic reform should take, something disturbing is afoot. The new tone of clumsy self-confidence of the West German Chancellor was the sinister counterpoint to the joyful sound of East Germans entering the political arena.

Scope for the Left

One might consider what I have written so far to be quite odd: At the very time when Berliners remind us that history is also made from below, I am writing about the great powers, about the preoccupations of the mighty and, in general, about politics from above. Yet there is some method to my apparent madness. The above lines were designed to suggest where the Western left can exercise pressure on events to help them move in a progressive direction. For once, the scope for its action seems to be quite considerable.

The first item on the left's agenda is obvious. It can now relaunch a vast campaign for nuclear and other disarmament, for the dissolution of both military blocs, for the removal from Europe of nuclear weapons and foreign troops. This action can be coordinated on both sides of the Elbe.



Indeed, the question of German reunification and the spectacular loosening of Soviet control over its sphere of influence add a sense of urgency. The circumstances are propitious. Those who used to proclaim their devotion to democracy in Eastern Europe and who now, when they can do something about it, desperately cling to NATO, will be revealed for what they ultimately are—spokespersons for the armorers.

The second plank of the left's campaign is more educational, since it is less likely to influence policy. Our official pundits have been preaching self-determination in Eastern Europe and condemning all forms of Soviet interference in the internal affairs of other countries. But as soon as our Western governments and financial institutions got a chance, they showed what they are capable of in practice. Helmut Kohl told the East Germans plainly that if they want serious cooperation they must provide a market for capitalist expansion. The International Monetary Fund told the new Solidarity government to apply unpopular measures for which it had no mandate (not that the I.M.F. asked for such a mandate). Mammon has its own conception of democracy, and it would be idle to expect it to mend its ways even if an effective campaign were mounted against its interference. Since the one who pays the piper calls the tune, the consequences of deep Western financial penetration of Eastern Europe are incalculable.

In light of this, one should qualify what was said earlier about Gorbachev's attempt to preserve the bloc while its members opt for different social systems, and about his legal capacity to control the situation. If the economic frontiers between the two blocs were opened completely, with full convertibility of currencies and no control whatsoever over foreign trade, at this stage in their development, with their different levels of productivity and living standards, the countries of Eastern Europe would be rapidly absorbed into the capitalist system. Contrary to what some Eastern Europeans think, they would not even occupy a position as

comfortable as, say, that of Austria or even that of Mexico. But they would be absorbed nevertheless. Once the social system across the Elbe is abolished—that is, should Eastern Europe be converted to capitalism—no legal veto will enable Gorbachev to perpetuate the division for long. To survive separately, the “post-capitalist” countries of Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union, must invent an alternative model of development and preserve it, at least for a time, against the full blast of foreign competition. It is in this search for an alternative that the Western left has its most ambitious and most difficult task.

The October Revolution took place seventy-two years ago. In roughly the first half of that period, it had a dual impact on the outside world. On the one hand, the pioneering example of the Bolsheviks' successful seizure of power inspired millions in their struggle for a better life. On the other, the identification of socialism with a backward and rather barbaric state discredited the very concept. It is difficult to calculate which was the more important. Rather ironically, it was when efforts had already been made to purge Stalinism of its worst features that its image deteriorated most sharply. The propaganda about the gulag became most successful when the gulag had shrunk beyond recognition. In the past twenty years or so association with the Soviet Union, real or imagined, was nothing but a handicap for the Western left. Now the Russians themselves are disowning their Stalinist and Brezhnevian past. Naturally, we must still study the Soviet past carefully to avoid pitfalls, but we can make it quite clear that we are looking for something more than just an improved version of the Soviet model.

Deprived of its handicap, and of its guilt by association, the Western left should get on with its job. It must attack the very foundations of our own system: its inability to turn technological invention into meaningful jobs (or even a sufficient number of mindless ones); its incapacity to conceive of growth for any purpose other than profit, with the attendant environmental destruction; its commercialization of art, culture and even human relationships; its exploitation of the Third World; and its perpetuation of social, sexual and racial inequalities. The attack is important, and at the same time insufficient. It will not be persuasive until it is coupled with an alternative project and the vision of a different society.

What does this have to do, it will be objected, with the Soviet world? The Eastern Europeans will dismiss such ideas as, at best, a game for the privileged and, at worst, the ravings of the rich. The objectors have a point. We should be neither surprised nor shocked by the fact, confirmed by the recent images from Berlin, that many Eastern Europeans are dazzled by our city lights and the displays in our shop windows. To break the spell of the not so discreet charm of the bourgeoisie, it is not enough to reveal the seamy side of our glittering society. It is necessary to show the East that we can build a better life together, despite our different origins. Voices from East Germany suggest that our search for companions with whom to build a radical alternative on the ruins of the shattered Stalinist model may not be quite as long and as difficult as it once seemed. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

A Student of Desire

DON BOGEN

HUMAN WISHES. By Robert Hass. Ecco Press. 86 pp. \$17.95.

What's immediately striking in Robert Hass's work is the sheer abundance of pleasures. Who else among our poets would bring together the delights of landscape, climate and food in a salad "with chunks of cooked chicken in a creamy basil mayonnaise a shade lighter than the Coast Range in August" ("Vintage") or include a recipe for onion soup—complete with shredded Samsøe and advice on how to eat it with friends—as a "Song to Survive the Summer"? In his incisive collection of essays, *Twentieth Century Pleasures*, Hass set our engagement with poetry squarely in the context of other forms of satisfaction—in domestic life, in nature, in the senses. The title of his new book of poetry, *Human Wishes*, reveals his basic concerns: He is a student of desire, of what we want and how likely we are to get it.

If one pleasure of poetry is the evocation of beautiful things, Hass's work definitely satisfies. From his first book, *Field Guide*, which won the Yale Series of Younger Poets Award in 1973, through *Praise* in 1979 and now *Human Wishes*, he has shown a mastery of sensory description, combining the light touch of a calligrapher with the specificity of a botanist. Place—particularly northern California, where he grew up and now lives—has always been central in Hass's poetry, and few writers capture the special qualities of this environment as well. "January" gives a fine sense of that gorgeous oddity, a Bay Area winter:

Back at my desk: no birds, no rain,
but light—the white of Shasta daisies,
and two red geraniums against the
fence,
and the dark brown of wet wood,
glistening a little as it dries.

Hass's continuing engagement with Japanese poetry is evident here. Casual in tone, the lines seem almost transpar-

Don Bogen is the author of After the Splendid Display (Wesleyan University Press). He teaches at the University of Cincinnati.

ent, as if they were just a moment's observation. Yet their arrangement is exquisite. The contrast between the blank monosyllables of the first line and a half—"no birds, no rain"—and the sudden appearance of those specific, polysyllabic Shasta daisies; the step-by-step expansion of the color scheme—"white," "red," then "dark brown"; the subtle echoes of sound in "red" and "wet," "daisies" and "dries"; and the hint of blank verse for closure in the last line show a rigorous and self-effacing craftsmanship. The lines have been written so well they hardly seem "written" at all.

With his California subjects and his skill at evocation, Hass could easily have settled for the reproduction of a predictable and popular verse "product." Indeed, a few years after *Field Guide* came out, a small fad for poems with references to food, accounts of hikes and other surface elements of his work flourished in the literary magazines. But Hass is after something more than sensuous word painting. The mind behind the description is analytical, probing, unsatisfied with the conventional stances language often provides. The poems in *Human Wishes* are energetic and full of surprises. They turn on themselves suddenly, breaking into self-consciousness or rejecting their initial visions, as when the idyllic reverie of "Late Spring" is revealed to be a fabrication that keeps the poet awake at night, or the list of pretty images at the start of "Spring Drawing" and again in "Spring Drawing 2" implies but then fails to generate a sentence.

Hass's awareness of the limits of language helps fuel his restless exploration of different poetic strategies. Each of his books makes use of a range of approaches and forms, from rhymed iambic pentameter to haiku, from brief lyrics to sequences of fragments to long discursive meditations. In *Human Wishes* he consolidates the strengths of his earlier work while pushing on into fresh territory. The first section of the book, for example, develops a new kind of line: lengthy, proselike in its rhythms and set off in a stanza by itself. These lines function as independent postulates in an argument, some plush and physical like the one about chicken salad, others

gnarled with abstraction like these from the first poem in the book, "Spring Drawing":

as if spirit attended to plainness only,
the more complicated forms ex-
hausting it, tossed-off grapestems
becoming crystal chandeliers,

as if radiance were the meaning of
meaning, and justice responsible to
daydream not only for the strict
beauty of denial,

but as a felt need to reinvent the inner
form of wishing.

Hass has never shied away from the language of theoretical discourse. In fact, he finds a rarefied music in the polysyllabic abstractions, long clauses and parallel constructions of his argument. This is not a music everyone will enjoy. It can be daunting to encounter a passage like the one above on the first page of a book of poetry. But if the demands on a reader are high, they signal Hass's commitment to his enterprise: an art that can both evoke and analyze the complexity of human desires.

The second section of *Human Wishes* consists of prose poems, a form prefigured in some of the work in *Praise* but not developed consistently until now. Rimbaud is the father of this type of poem, and much American work in the genre still reads like a bad translation from the French. Hass has avoided the portentousness and easy surrealism that can afflict paragraphs trying too hard to be poetic. Instead, he looks to narrative models—the short story, the anecdote—as well as to allegory and the personal essay as guideposts. A few of the shorter prose poems—"Duck Blind," "In the Bahamas"—can seem a little thin, but the longer pieces give him room to juxtapose scenes and events, building up a constellation of meaning. "The Harbor at Seattle," for example, looks at friendship and personal tragedy within different contexts of history, art and work. Each paragraph in this beautifully structured poem works like a controlled reaction as the poet puts two elements together, notes the effects, then moves on to the next step. In the title poem of *Human Wishes*, Hass achieves a more dense interactive texture. This page-long paragraph uses rapid shifts of focus, from the Upanishads to a Cambridge pub, to expose a web of varied individual desires—for beauty, for understanding, for wealth, for a good time with friends—

in all its intricacy and imperfection.

The unspoken element in all "human wishes" is, of course, vanity. Hass may not be as explicit as Juvenal on this point—he finds beauty in some of these wishes, flawed as they are—but he's well aware of the devastating power of time and human failings. In the extended meditations that make up the last two sections of *Human Wishes*, he traces pleasures and their loss—in love, in family life, in the living world—with intelligence and a deft control of tone. Despite the wealth of personal detail in these poems, there is little overt self-dramatization. The poet is not set up as the tragic hero of his own life. His presence in the work is rather that of a man *thinking*: remembering, describing, defining, comparing, imagining.

As in the prose poems, the strength of these meditations lies in Hass's ability to handle several themes at the same time and his exploration of the range of possibilities the form presents. In one of the most intriguing, "Berkeley Eclogue," he takes on the hoary literary convention of the pastoral dialogue. The decorous speech of stylized shepherds becomes an internal argument, with a harsh second voice—a kind of nagging muse—prodding the poet toward more clarity and depth with italicized comments such as "*You can skip this part*" and "*Do you believe in that?*" Other meditations are symphonic in structure. "Santa Barbara Road" introduces, repeats and varies several different motifs—the poet building a bench, children and their parents, classical Chinese thought, June weather, various walks—in an extended reflection on the abundance and impermanence of family life.

Hass's sense of the interrelatedness of all human endeavor gives his book a breadth of perspective and a distinct focus. Even the man brewing one cup of tea and immersing himself in his own memories at the end of "Thin Air" is connected to the frustrated warehouse worker who packed the tea leaves. This is not liberal sympathy but a recognition of how things work, of the context of suffering and loss in which we live. It is a mark of Hass's integrity as a poet that he rejects the usual consolations here. Art, nature, love—these are certainly pleasures but not solutions. They are parts of what he calls in "On Squaw Peak"

... the abundance
the world gives, the more-than-you-
bargained-for

surprise of it, waves breaking,
the sudden fragrance of the mimulus at
creekside
sharpened by the summer dust.
Things bloom up there. They are
for their season alive in those bright
vanishings
of air we ran through.

If the first half of the passage is as rich and surprising as its subject, the last sentence stumbles on the perfect awkward placement of "for their season." In *Human Wishes* Robert Hass captures both the brightness of the world and its vanishing. □

On the Road

PAGAN KENNEDY

THE CHINCHILLA FARM. By Judith Freeman. W.W. Norton. 308 pp. \$19.95.

*I go out walkin' after midnight
out in the moonlight,
just like we used to do.
I'm always walkin' after midnight
searching for you.*

—Don Hecht and Alan Block,
"Walkin' After Midnight,"
Sung by Patsy Cline

Judith Freeman plunged into print a year ago with *Family Attractions*, a collection of stories as mournful as country music. The characters, between whom the distances are long and harsh as the salt flats of Freeman's native Utah, gaze out windows and wear out floorboards pining for people who are sometimes right beside them.

In *The Chinchilla Farm*, her first novel, Freeman follows with a character every bit as wistful. Verna Flake, the engaging narrator, sings snatches of Patsy Cline songs to herself: She's been done wrong but just can't seem to forget the bum. Verna's got more grit than your average country-music heroine, though; when her husband walks out she demands that he leave the truck and trailer so she can move out of Utah and start a new life.

Although Verna takes to the road, her husband is still with her, every memory leading back to him. She often pictures him out in a hayfield, where "it seems to me that maybe he's stopped work in order to look over the land he grew up on. But then he turns slightly and I see what he's really doing. He's relieving himself on the silver weeds." It is no wonder that when he betrays her she feels compelled to leave the spot he has claimed in this doggy fashion.

Naming the novel's three sections "Utah," "Los Angeles" and "Mexico,"

Pagan Kennedy is a regular contributor to the Voice Literary Supplement.

Freeman emphasizes that, to Verna, a new life really means a new place, a web of culture and country where she will once again feel at home. Moreover, the locales Verna encounters profoundly affect her because she's seen so little of the world—suddenly in her 30s, she's been evicted from her small town into a baffling, brutal L.A.

Among the Raymond Carver-style characters of contemporary fiction, so self-absorbed they could be slapped down in any suburbia, Verna is a refreshing anomaly. Perhaps because she comes from a big family, she sees herself as a small figure, one among many in the landscape. And Freeman has Verna cross paths with people the likes of whom are not often treated seriously in literature: A street person and a retarded girl, for instance, are brought to life as rounded, sympathetic characters. Also a departure is Freeman's depiction of America as, rather than a coast-to-coast shopping mall, a place of startling contrasts where local cultures flourish.

Freeman's local color is most vibrant in the Utah section. At first glance, Verna's life there seems a kitsch cliché: She works at a bowling alley, smokes Luckys and gets dumped for a Miss Wyoming runner-up. But as Verna describes a childhood that to her seems dishwater—she comes from a family of ten, where children were "stacked up on bunk beds like tiers of chickens in a coop"—suddenly Utah looks exotic.

Through her we glimpse the Western mysteries of Mormonism: Verna's parents "twice a week . . . dressed in white and assumed other people's names, maybe some Germans, say, or some Irish who'd lived in the seventeenth century. They took the names of these long-dead people so they could be baptized for them. The goal, I'd once been told, was to baptize the entire white race of the world since the dawn of time, so there was lots to do."

The Great Salt Lake is equally mythic.

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Verna remembers it sometimes rising so high that "the road that led to our house . . . ran right down into the lake and disappeared, like a joke." This led to a strange way of seeing: "Treetops rose from out of the lake, and the maroon tips of tamarack willows. The barn of a neighboring farm was soon swallowed by water so that it seemed to be a floating houseboat," which could as easily describe her inner landscape. The drawback of growing up in a close, crowded Mormon family is that she never has solitude enough to see the bare earth of her own self.

Though one would not want to wish it on poor Verna, it's a shame she doesn't stay put. Freeman sets such high standards in the first section that what follows, though fine in itself, can't quite measure up. The Utah that Freeman must have observed in the fever of childhood is crusted with memories and histories, like the salt crystals that cling to the ground when the lake has receded. In contrast, L.A. and Mexico are flat, like landscapes glanced at from the window of a fast-moving car. While Freeman should be commended for portraying an L.A. buzzing with salsa music and festooned with street dwellers, none of the city's sights has the urgency of, say, some frozen gloves glimpsed in Utah.

So skillful in portraying longing, Freeman has trouble with quiescence, and never quite resolves Verna's stubborn attachment to her husband. Throughout the book, Verna describes an important landmark of her childhood, the neighbor's chinchilla farm. She thinks back to it, musing, "Some impulse seems to propel humans into immediate recoupling, replacing what's gone almost before we've understood what it is to miss it. Not so with chinchillas. . . . Sometimes, sheer pining for the lost loved one sends the mate to an early grave."

If Patsy Cline had decided, what the heck, she'd have the woman roaming the highway in "Walkin' After Midnight" suddenly find her lover in the last verse, she'd have ruined the haunting loneliness of that song. But Freeman does just that. *The Chinchilla Farm* ends with wedding bells ringing—an especially abrupt conclusion since she shows so little of Verna's courtship with her new husband, a trust-funder who, if you ask me, is more of a bum than the last one. Nor is it clear how Verna replaces a rootless L.A. for the Mormon Eden from which she has been expelled. It's not that

Verna shouldn't find her new life; it's just hard to believe all her homesickness can suddenly recede without leaving some salty crystals clinging poisonously to her heart.

Though marred by a saccharine ending, *The Chinchilla Farm* is a tremendous coup for a first novel, for any novel. Rather than reproducing the tropes of modern fiction, Freeman reintroduces us to an America of transcendental landscapes, cultures like forgotten flowers and festive, fierce cities. One can only hope that in future works she will, as so many country songs advise, leave off her roaming. For it is when mining the strange soil of Utah that Freeman brings her richest gifts to literature. □

FILMS.

STUART KLAWANS

Henry V
Mystery Train
Valmont
Shocker

With his thatch of sandy hair, blunt nose and rounded jawline (suggestive of boyishness and his native Ulster), Kenneth Branagh has the face of a commoner, which is one of the many attractions of his portrayal of Shakespeare's Henry V. Walking among his troops at night or urging them on to battle, he is as mud-spattered as any of his men and only a little better dressed. A two-day stubble on his face, a ribbon of spit often visible between his lips, he seems more comrade than commander. "We band of brothers," he calls his army, and for a change you feel that Henry means those words. He leads through eloquence, appealing to shared feelings, because eloquence is his only resource. His troops are tired, ill, bemired and outnumbered. If Henry partakes of their lot so willingly, rather than generaling in style like the French, it may be because he isn't fully convinced he's all that different from the soldiers. This Henry looks like the son of a usurper.

"Now beshrew my father's ambition! He was thinking of civil wars when he got me," Henry says to the princess Katherine. "But in faith, Kate, the elder I wax the better I shall appear. My comfort is that old age, that ill layer-up of beauty, can do no more spoil upon my face." You don't hear those lines in

Laurence Olivier's 1944 production—it would have been absurd for him to have belittled his features. What's more, the conceit of Olivier's film, which begins as the re-creation of a Globe performance, called for him to play the part of an actor playing Henry V. His Henry could swagger and roar like a matinee idol because that's just what he was. But Kenneth Branagh has a plain-enough mug that he can joke about his looks; and as a director he has an agenda far different from Olivier's. His *Henry V* does not charm you into a theatrical illusion but plunges you into a filmed world. The movie concerns not a matinee idol but a conscience-stricken young leader. Its Agincourt is not a glorious pageant but a brutal slog through the mud, at the end of which Henry may at last feel himself to be fully a king, at the expense of a lot of other people's blood. Though you still feel he's a hero, it's not so much because he's won as because he knows the cost of the victory.

Now, to ask the obvious question: To what degree is Branagh's interpretation heartfelt, and in what measure is it the effort of an ambitious young man to supplant Olivier? It makes an all-too-obvious statement when a rising British actor—especially an alumnus of the Royal Shakespeare Company like Branagh—decides to adapt, direct and star in *Henry*. Then, when you consider how much his film looks like a detailed reply to Olivier's, it's hard not to suspect Branagh of being more willful than inspired—especially when he has the audacity to be only 28 years old. So let me say flat out that I like everything about Branagh's film. I like the adaptation, the cast, the direction, the cinematography and the music. In fact, I like it so much I don't even want to write about it. I would prefer to leave my desk right now and watch it again.

Then I could see the magisterial Derek Jacobi as the Chorus, striking a match on a darkened movie set and asking for a muse of fire; Ian Holm as Fluellen, finding the valor and dignity in a character traditionally played as a clown; Paul Scofield as the aged King of France, weighed down with the burden of a war he knows he should not pursue; and Emma Thompson as a delightfully droll Katherine, making you laugh out loud at her scenes, instead of smiling at them out of respect for the author. Add Judi Dench as Mistress Quickly and Robbie Coltrane as Falstaff and you've got a cast so impressive that Henry himself had

damn well better know what he's doing.

That must be at least part of the reason Branagh introduces himself in a set piece of old-fashioned movie spectacle: Doors to the throne room swing open without human agency, while the camera, at floor level, looks up at a back-lit silhouette, which strides forward like every monarch who ever commanded the screen, rolled up with every gunfighter and Darth Vader, too. Then, as a fanfare continues on the soundtrack, a tracking camera presents Henry's point of view, with courtiers

lined up on either side bowing to him, one by one, then waiting for him to assume the throne, then taking their seats at his signal. Only after all this choreography do you see Henry's face—which turns out to be rather plain and emits a soft, controlled voice.

The voice grows stronger throughout the film—though not right away—while the face and body, which hardly seem imposing at first, eventually take on the grandeur promised by the silhouette. And the best thing about *Henry V*, to my mind, is the way Branagh achieves

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this transformation as much through his direction as through his acting. He knows how to cut from a golden-hued flashback to a shot of his own face, endowing Henry with a whole range of emotions without his having to speak a word. He also knows the value of tight close-ups, of voiceovers and rhythmic editing and reaction shots of the characters around the King. This *Henry V* is conceived as a movie. Yes, it does full justice to Shakespeare's poetry—the cast alone guarantees that—and honors his dramaturgy as well, bringing an uncommon darkness and psychological depth to this notoriously cold-blooded hero. But better still, *Henry V* does all this while providing the thrills of traditional moviemaking: You can eat popcorn with the same abandon as at a John Ford matinee.

The culmination of Branagh's movie-making comes after the battle of Agincourt. In the Olivier film, this episode is a fairly bloodless affair, in which you see racing horses, gallant knights, pennants fluttering against a blue sky filled with fleecy clouds. Then, with only the briefest transitional shots, Olivier takes you into the French court for the negotiations and the happy ending. Branagh, for his Agincourt, all but copies Orson Welles's great battle sequence from *Chimes at Midnight*, complete with slow motion, mud and suffering horses. Though the imitation is less than terrific, at least he's chosen a good model. But the battle itself turns out to be a prelude to Branagh's real coup: a seemingly endless tracking shot across the scene of death. This is his *Paths of Glory* shot, his *Touch of Evil* excursion, and it is breathtaking. While Pat Doyle's music builds on the soundtrack (a contribution as central to this *Henry* as William Walton's is to Olivier's), Branagh takes the camera across a hell of palisades, smoke, fallen horses, arrows in the mud and corpses without number. Henry himself is carrying on his back the corpse of Falstaff's serving boy, his last link to the past. As he walks across the battlefield, he passes by all the other characters who remain alive and the bodies of some who have fallen, turning the shot into an elegiac summation of everything that has been suffered in the movie, bringing an undertone of near-tragic solemnity to the negotiation that follows with the King of France.

According to the publicity handout for *Henry V*, Branagh and his associates, who have formed a company

called Renaissance Films, intend to produce at least two more pictures. As far as I'm concerned, they can't do it fast enough. Their first movie has given them the most auspicious company debut since the Mercury Theatre took to the screen. A foolish claim to make, I know; but then, this *Henry V* is a glorious excuse for folly.

Jim Jarmusch's *Mystery Train*, a new film by the author of *Stranger Than Paradise* and *Down By Law*, is a hipster's version of *Grand Hotel*. It turns the old M-G-M production on its head, showing you provincial squalor in place of cosmopolitan luxury. The setting, for the most part, is the Arcade Hotel, a dismal heap near a railroad viaduct in Memphis, Tennessee, where assorted characters come together; but that's not to say that they interact, or even meet. Through a neatly conceived structure—so neat that I resist giving it away—Jarmusch not only inverts *Grand Hotel* but also turns it inside-out. The characters coexist in an increasingly complex framework, then travel on with hardly a hint of one another.

The first of them are a couple of teenagers from Yokohama, touring the United States by train in order to visit the shrines of rock and roll. Mitzuko (Youki Kudoh) is thrilled to be in the city of Elvis and can't wait to see Graceland. Her boyfriend, Jun (Masatoshi Nagase), who seems to think it a point of pride to appear glum at all times, keeps reminding her that Carl Perkins was better. These are the innocents abroad; next comes the sophisticate. Luisa (Nicoletta Braschi) is on her way back to Rome, accompanied by a casket bearing her husband's corpse. We never learn how he died, only that it happened suddenly and that Luisa is heartbroken. A copy of Ariosto under her arm, she wanders through Memphis on her one-night stopover, handing out money with the largesse of someone who no longer gives a damn.

Last comes the degenerate abroad. Johnny (Joe Strummer) is an Englishman who has been living in Memphis with a transplanted New Jerseyite (Elizabeth Bracco) and working as a laborer. Suddenly he has lost both his lover and his job. Taking this double catastrophe as his excuse, he lives out the American fantasy of every European bohemian—drinking whisky straight from the bottle, waving a gun, hanging out with black people and complaining loudly about

everybody's racism, which he feels he understands much better than we do.

Seen on this level, as a study of foreigners passing through an oneiric America, *Mystery Train* offers much of the charm of Jarmusch's previous films. His America is invariably a rundown place, where the tourists encounter a spectacle of pure banality and find it wondrous, while the natives go about exercising their constitutional right to be eccentrics and bums. And, of course, Jarmusch's America is the land of rhythm and blues: the funkier nation on earth, blessed by nature with incomparably rich deposits of riffs, hooks, vamps and wails. Hence Memphis as a setting, specifically those neighborhoods not advertised by the Chamber of Commerce; and hence the final twist in *Mystery Train*, which turns the film into something directly comparable to *Grand Hotel* after all.

Grand Hotel gave its studio the chance to put a lot of stars into one picture; *Mystery Train* offers the same chance to Jarmusch, with the understanding that his stars are musicians and fellow hipsters. No sooner do the Japanese kids walk into the Memphis train station than they encounter Mr. "Walking the Dog" himself, Rufus Thomas—a deity of funk, disguised here as a middle-aged man who wants a light for his cigar. Oblivious to this visitation, the kids pass on, only to meet another avatar of r&b at the Arcade Hotel. Screamin' Jay Hawkins has momentarily taken on the form of a night clerk. Resplendent in a red jacket with matching tie, speaking with a gravity to which only the truly hip may aspire, Hawkins is the local genius of *Mystery Train*. The disc jockey's voice coming over the lobby radio belongs to none other than Tom Waits. The bellhop Hawkins orders around, Cinqué Lee, is an aristocrat of hip in his own right, being a son of Bill Lee and brother of Spike. Even the most objectionable of Hawkins's guests is a star—Joe Strummer is best known as a member of the Clash.

This means that *Mystery Train* produces something akin to the alienation effect: the M-G-M response, in which you're constantly aware that the people on screen are not simply characters. They're celebrities, too, which allows you to choose between two ways of looking at the movie. You can take the characters at face value, thus adopting the viewpoint of Jarmusch's tourists, mistaking passing phantoms for the sub-

stance of American life; or you can decide that *Mystery Train* is really about Rufus Thomas, Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Joe Strummer and the rest, thus assuming the wised-up attitude that Jarmusch admires in the better American hipsters.

Either way, *Mystery Train* turns out to be funny, smart and curiously affecting. Photographed by Robby Müller with almost too loving an eye for local color—squalor has rarely looked this splendid—the film consistently draws out your emotions. It elicits amused sympathy for a young man who declares (in Japanese) that "it feels cool to be 18"; admiration for the offhand courage of a woman who, having just lost her husband, listens to everybody else's story

while withholding her own; fascination for the way born losers go about screwing up their lives. And then, having called up those feelings, *Mystery Train* lets them evanesce. The train pulls out. The characters (or stars) go on being whoever they are. It's all as confused as the widow when she says, in a charming Italian mispronunciation, "I feel discombobulated." It's as wise as Screamin' Jay Hawkins when he replies, in the grandest line reading of the year, "Yes. I know the feeling."

Had Stephen Frears and Christopher Hampton not beaten them to the screen last year, Milos Forman and Jean-Claude Carrière might have called

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their new production *Les liaisons dangereuses*, or something to that effect. Instead, they've chosen to name the film *Valmont*, after the principal male character—though, given the movie's focus, it might as well have been called *Cécile*, after the ingénue, or perhaps, in honor of Forman's direction, *Wet T-Shirt Night at Lou's Ancien Régime*. But the latter title somewhat oversells the movie. Though the characters keep getting wet, apparently with some erotic intention, Forman and Carrière have removed the danger from the liaisons, leaving the viewer with a long, lavish snooze of a picture. It's like your recollection of the novel during a bout of flu, when you've taken a double shot of Nyquil.

And yet the movie should have worked. Carrière's past scripts, especially his collaborations with Luis Buñuel, would have recommended him as an ideal adapter of Choderlos de Laclos's novel. As for Forman, his appreciation for self-serving spectacle is long established. A direct line runs from the cheap beauty pageant of *The Fireman's Ball* to the rich but equally sleazy display of *Amadeus*. You might say that his settings have changed from the provinces to the capital but his assumptions about people have remained unaltered. Even the highest-born of Forman's characters in *Valmont* seems less a nobleman than a self-important bureaucrat; and the title

character, as played by Colin Firth, often resembles a bumptious adolescent.

When excited, Valmont trips over his own feet. When surprised, he breaks into a goofy laugh. His method of seduction involves as much buffoonery as charm, so that he gives the impression of a healthy, friendly, not terribly bright young idler—a yuppie pub-crawler, perhaps, or the son of the richest merchant in one of Forman's little Czech towns. Nor do the women in the film seem particularly aristocratic, or even French or eighteenth-century. Madame de Merteuil (Annette Bening), fresh-faced and unfailingly cheerful, is every woman who's ever had to swallow an insult and smile, every housewife who's ever felt that the vilest of all words is "husband."

Already, you can see the potential for revisionism. The Frears-Hampton *Dangerous Liaisons* provided a fairly standard interpretation of these characters. Valmont and Merteuil were evil and knew it, and their knowledge was precisely what gave them their thrill. But in *Valmont* the characters are more or less like you and me. They manage to think well of themselves most of the time, and their plots seem more petty than vicious. Valmont is truly in love with virtuous Madame de Tourvel. (Though, since she's played by the mush-mouthed Meg Tilly, who gives the impression of having

developed the power of speech sometime in the second week of shooting, perhaps "besotted" would be a better word.) As for Merteuil, she has been cruelly abandoned by her lover and seems to have every reason to want revenge. So the plot, in this version, becomes a study in how these almost innocent desires, having been set in motion, spin disastrously out of control.

That, at any rate, is *Valmont* on paper. On the screen it's something else. Lulled by the funereal pacing and thudingly predictable dialogue, the viewer is likely to forget about the characters, who are forever hanging around in medium shot, and start cataloguing the furniture. This is a great movie for antique appraisers. The rest of us are likely to be brought back to consciousness only by an occasional visual buzzing. The movie was edited, for all I can tell, in an Osterizer.

Valmont is not a complete disaster. Two or three scenes live up to their promise; and the casting of the young and able Fairuza Balk as Cécile brings out the perversity of the schemers who surround this 15-year-old convent girl. But given the choice between the two recent versions of *Les liaisons dangereuses*—one cold, the other boring—my preference is to read.

Wes Craven's *Shocker* begins in a dream and ends inside a beam of microwaves. In passing from one to the other, it traverses an external reality made up largely of the execution chamber of a prison (the most lurid of the settings), a student's quarters (the most threatening) and a lovely public park, complete with lake, joggers' paths and easy-to-use bulldozers. It is in this last locale that *Shocker*, which starts as a well-made but conventional picture, at last takes off into movie heaven. It is a classic: a *House of Atreus* for the television age, a rock-opera critique of capital punishment, a translation of silent film comedy into the genre of the slasher picture—all this and an apparently heart-felt dramatization of "Teen Angel" to boot. I figure it to be eight to ten times more exciting than *Batman* and a lot funnier, too.

At first, it appears as if *Shocker* will be a reworking of Craven's *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, with a psychopathic TV repairman substituted for Freddy Krueger. (There's even a reprise of the *Nightmare* opening credits, set in the Workshop of Evil.) But that's all just the setup,

VITALE

i.m. Virgil Thomson

Remember Vitale, the old aesthete
knifed to his death on Mulberry Street.
I hear he said, sinking to his knees,
on the first night of San Gennaro,
Enfin, quelque chose m'arrive!

That's how I want to go, with an aperçu,
or koan like Basho or Lao-Tzu.
"I am the catchphrase and the caught,"
the strong gods assembled will hear me say.
"The Japanese beetle and the rose."

(Say I am dying and a shaman croaks,
with fresher wisdom and better jokes:
the gods fly, deaf to my remarks,
"I am the password and the pass.
I the asshole and the ass.")

Knifed for nothing, Vitale, you lived for art
and ended slumming like some old fart.
But for *Enfin, quelque chose m'arrive!*
Which words recollected here by me
alone keep you from obscurity.

Ben Sonnenberg

much as *Nightmare* itself now appears to have been a limbering up for Craven's career. His next step forward, the visionary and disturbing *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, promised that Craven would become a truly interesting filmmaker. *Shocker* is the promise kept, and I would recommend that you rush out to see it now, while it's still on the screen. To watch it on a VCR would be something like reciting the Lord's Prayer backward. □

ART.

ARTHUR C. DANTO

Velázquez

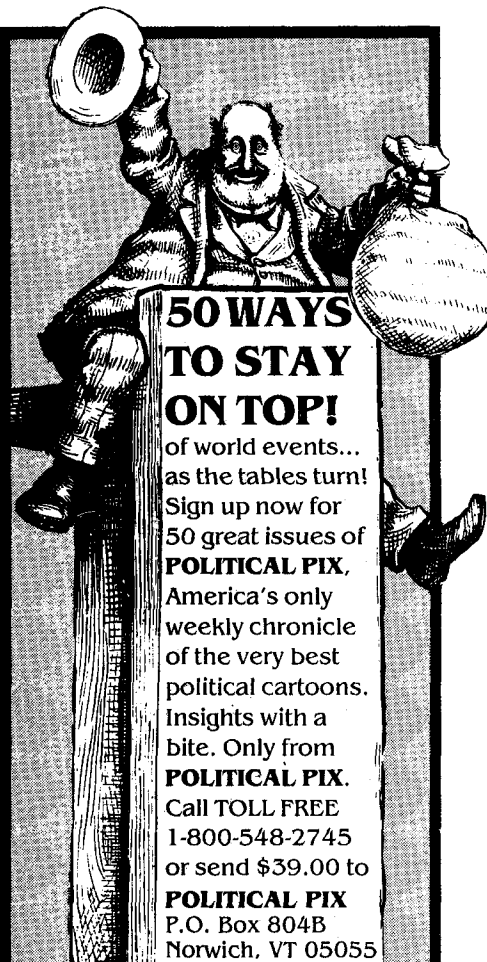
Anecdotes have their own truth, deeper, often, than the bare historical truth that would be theirs if the events they pretend to record in fact took place. It is a matter of historical truth that Velázquez painted the great portrait of his slave and assistant, Juan de Pareja, during his second sojourn in Italy. Pareja was a Moor of an "odd color" according to an early biography of Velázquez, who was his master in two senses of the term. The anecdote is this: Before exhibiting the painting, Velázquez had Pareja himself carry it around to some influential Roman acquaintances. "They stood staring at the painted canvas, and then at the original, with admiration and amazement, not knowing which they should address and which would answer them." Perhaps it was because Pareja was a slave that Velázquez selected him as a subject, for it provided the singularly theatrical opportunity of having Pareja show up at someone's *palazzo* bearing his own likeness. The anecdotal truth is this: Velázquez meant to *dazzle*—not just show what he was capable of, but do so in a way calculated to amaze. He was a master of conceptual drama.

The Roman acquaintances murmured, of course, the obligatory compliment that one would have believed the painted head could talk—something people said about painters at the very dawn of illusionism. For Velázquez it was not the right compliment. He was not bent on illusion and in fact had some sense of his limitations in bringing illusions off. What he meant to show was what he could do with paint; it was essential to the shock that it be perceived as paint and not misperceived as flesh. Consider the wide lace collar Pareja is

shown wearing, a form of luxurious ornamentation then forbidden by the sumptuary laws of Spain. The critical question is, Why did Velázquez paint his slave in this expensive accessory? The answer once more is, to dazzle. Viewers were meant to be astounded that anyone could generate out of visible flecks and dabs of white paint a lavish confection of lace. At no point was illusion a possibility. Nobody, looking at Pareja's mop of hair, would think it real hair. Everyone would see it as smudges of paint of indeterminate color that, without giving up their identity as paint, miraculously became the wiry coiffure of an exotic man. Or again, out of strokes that defy analysis, the artist achieved a velvet sleeve.

Velázquez was, after all, seeking commissions. Specialists say that it was immediately after the Pareja episode that he did the magnificent portrait of Innocent X, one of Velázquez's many masterpieces, which the Metropolitan Museum of Art (owner of the portrait of Juan de Pareja since 1971) was unable to secure for its nonetheless spectacular exhibition of this transcendent genius. (The show lasts until January 7.) In the papal portrait, once again, without paint ever concealing itself as paint, are the white touches that shimmer as lace, as the shirred white garment the Pope wears under the cape of heavy crimson silk the painter has summoned out of sweeps and swags of pigment. And beyond even that is the fierce and crafty face of the throned Pontiff, Innocent by name but hardly by nature, peering out from the corners of his eyes at a difficult and treacherous world he is shifty enough to master.

The anecdote, if my reading of it holds, yields an explanatory hypothesis for a good many Velázquez paintings. Think, for particular example, of the astonishing *Old Woman Cooking Eggs*, done in 1618, when Velázquez was 19. It is one of the so-called *bodegón* works, domestic scenes in which it often seems as if the human beings are of secondary importance to the pots and pans and ladles arrayed on rough tables or suspended from kitchen walls. There are two *bodegones* in the show, the other being the even more compelling *Water-seller of Seville*. Each of them is an exercise in virtuosity in which the artist has chosen objects in order to display his ability to overcome the difficulties of painting them. One question scholars raise is for whom the paintings were



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done, but my sense is that they were advertisements by an artist possessed of tremendous gifts and in search of commissions. So they were executed in the same spirit as the portrait of Juan de Pareja or the measurably less successful Baroque paintings I shall discuss below, evidently done on speculation, since they were sold to the King of Spain: to display Velázquez's mastery of the Italian technologies of illusion.

Old Woman Cooking Eggs shows a variety of substances, selected in part to demonstrate the artist's ability to paint them convincingly: copper, brass, pottery both glazed and unglazed, straw, pewter, linen, the skin of onion and melon, the human eye, wood, eggshell, string and glass. The ceramic casserole is tipped up so we can admire the artistry of painted egg whites in varying stages of opacity. There are fewer substances in *Waterseller*, but in compensation there is the stunning virtuosity exhibited in the discoloration of the immense jug, due to misfiring in the kiln, and the way the clay looks when water trickles down its sides.

Both paintings are redeemed from mere boasting in the medium of paint by an extraordinary sense of mystery, as if the works had deep intelligence to

communicate in the notation of humble utensils. Thus the objects in *Old Woman Cooking Eggs* have an almost otherworldly luminescence—the light source comes from in front of the picture plane, highlighting the objects without illuminating the room, which is in the darkest of shadows behind the two figures. Each of these, the old woman and the boy, seems caught up in some meditation, and almost arrested in midaction. The boy holds a heavy, trussed melon with one hand and a glass cruet, perhaps of oil or of wine (each of them a ritual fluid), with the other. The woman and the boy are connected by their obliviousness of one another. The woman holds a spoon poised over the pan in one hand and an uncracked egg in her other, as the whites thicken beneath. It is as if the kitchen were a scene of otherworldly intervention or mystic visitation. In *Waterseller* the old man and the boy have hold of the base and stem of the water glass, respectively, but otherwise have no contact. Why is the glass in fact an ornamental goblet of intricate workmanship? And why does it contain a fig? The fig-bearing goblet is overdetermined; it enables Velázquez to dazzle and puzzle us at once. I am not sure this or any of

his puzzles are meant to be solved so much as merely felt. The paintings seem to me to have as part of their content the mysteries they transmit. And I think as well that the intermixture of mystery and mastery, each uncanny in its own but connected way, defines Velázquez's project throughout his career, down to *Las Meninas*, which to this day defeats learned interpreters. Cunning man: It is as if he assured his immortality by frustrating an understanding that seemed at once urgent and inaccessible.

Let us now examine the Baroque tableaux Velázquez executed on his first and, one might say, apprentice expedition to Italy, where he went to learn from masters who had nothing to teach him the next time he visited. These are striking partly because of their discontinuity with his overall style, due to their artificial theatricality and their organization of space. Velázquez has deployed gesticulating figures in a stagelike setting in relatively clear interior illumination, hence without the odd shadows that contribute to the portentousness of the *bodegones*. These are *Joseph's Bloody Coat Brought to Jacob*, in which the wicked brothers, appropriately scolded by a wise spaniel, pretend grief before

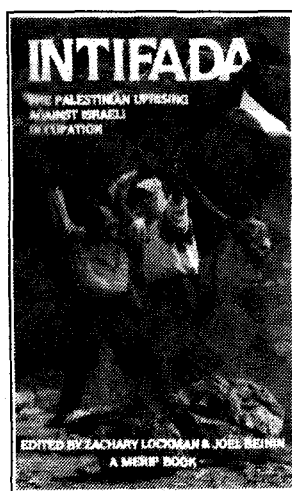
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their shattered father; and *The Forge of Vulcan*, in which a radiant Apollo informs Vulcan that his wife, Venus, is making out with Mars. In these efforts Velázquez is trying to be an Italian master, and it is instructive to see how clumsily he handles perspective, especially in the Joseph painting, where he utilized the kind of checkerboard tiles standardly employed to facilitate an illusion of orderly spatial recession. The stunned Jacob is shown rising from his seat on a carpeted dais, but Velázquez somehow cannot get the carpet to lie flat on the floor, or the walking stick to lean convincingly against the platform. Each painting is filled with stunning detail, such as the brilliant pitcher on the mantelpiece in Vulcan's workshop, which even so does not get transfigured in the way the objects in the *bodegones* do, emerging from the dark like angelic presences. I am insufficiently a scholar to say with certainty that Velázquez never attempted Italianate spaces again, but my sense is that he recognized that certain effects made possible by perspective lay outside his repertory of bewitchments. This is worth mentioning on two counts. First, reconstructions of alleged perspective in *Las Meninas* have, since Foucault, played a considerable role in the various "solutions" to the painting, when it is doubtful Velázquez could use perspective with the required precision. But secondly, we can appreciate how he deepened his work by finding a way around this curious ineptitude.

Compare the two remarkably similar portraits of his patron, Philip IV, owned by the Metropolitan and the Prado. They must have been done, judging from the King's features, at very nearly the same time. I conjecture that the Metropolitan portrait is earlier because Velázquez had not yet discovered the solution that was to enhance the mysteriousness I consider an intended effect of his work. Each portrait shows the King standing next to a chest, on which he has placed his authoritative and emblematic hat. In the Metropolitan version there is a horizontal line to mark where floor meets wall, implying the space of a room. This line has in effect been erased in the Prado version, where the tonalities of wall and floor are indistinguishable, so that the King is now placed in an undifferentiated space, spiritual rather than geometrical, almost fluid, with shadows floating like the ink emitted by cuttlefish. Velázquez, as far as I know, invented this kind of space, and used it to

great effect in his standing portraits, most stunningly in his study of the jester Pablo of Valladolid (not in this show). The jester is poised in undifferentiated space, alone with his shadow, which gives the space an intensity ordinarily dissipated in the royal portraits, where the subject co-occupies the space with some appropriate symbol of power—at the very least a table on which to place a hat or a chair on which to rest a possessing hand. A jester has no such authority, which is what gives him his power: Pablo almost wears his empty space like a visible soul and becomes in consequence monumental. Manet thought *Pablo de Valladolid* perhaps "the most astonishing piece of painting ever done." The undifferentiated space in which shadows float became natural for Manet and Degas to use—though for neither of them was mathematical perspective either a problem or a solution—and it found its way into portrait photography as a common device for lending presence to the face and features of the subject.

There is another anecdote concerning Juan de Pareja. Because he was a slave, Velázquez—"for the honor of art"—refused to allow him to have anything to do with drawing or painting as such, restricting him to the grinding of pigment or the priming of canvas, as if a drawing by a slave would be a perversion of art. (I recall an episode in *Elvira Madigan* in which the starving performer seeks to sell a portrait of herself by Toulouse-Lautrec, only to be told that drawings by dwarves are worth very little.) In any case, Juan de Pareja learned to draw and paint, and the anecdote has him placing one of his own paintings where the King ordinarily would have expected to see the new work of Velázquez. If the King were to admire the work, believing it to be by Velázquez, he would, in consistency, be acknowledging parity between slave and master. The mathematician Alan Turing proposed exactly such a test in connection with machines: If the only plausible explanation of a given output is that it is due to intelligence, when coming from a human, then consistency would require ascribing intelligence to a machine whose output is identical. The King in effect endorsed the Turing test by saying to Juan, "Be advised that any man that has this skill cannot be a slave."

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slave the Indians encountered there. One strategy was to revive the Aristotelian argument that there exist natural slaves, and while indeed it may be unchristian to enslave a human being, natural slaves are not human, being merely tools. The issue was debated at the faculties of Salamanca and Valladolid, and against this background, the King's emancipating remark takes on a certain profundity. If there are natural slaves there are natural masters. The ability to paint like Velázquez marks a metaphysical superiority. It sometimes is said that painters were mere artisans in the social hierarchies of Spain, but the anecdote suggests that this cannot have been altogether true in the royal household. There was a profound bond between monarch and painter. The immense privileges the King secured for Velázquez stand as evidence of this, given the obstacles even the King had to deal with to do so, and I think this recognition of his natural nobility had to mean a great deal to this artist. So in painting he was doing more than displaying unmatched gifts. He was claiming high position in the stratified universe of divine rulers and natural slaves. So it perhaps really did become less important to him to make paintings when acknowledgment of his true position came through such recognitions and rewards. To us this seems the wrong order of values; but that only measures the distance between his world and ours.

There is a great difficulty in finding our way into a world in which dwarves

and fools and jesters have a dignity and meaning we cannot altogether fathom, or in which a queen's handkerchief is almost as interesting as she is. And who knows how to read the marvelous dogs? There is a portrait, not shown in this exhibition, of Prince Felipe Próspero, the hope of his country, who died before reaching age 4, despite the arsenal of amulets draped around his pinafore. Felipe's hand is resting on the back of a velvet chair as a sign of status and power. In an earlier portrait of Doña Antonia de Ipeñarrieta, that lady also has the privilege of resting her hand on a chair, showing that she has the right to be seated while others stand. (For a discussion of the meaning of chairs, see my "The Seat of the Soul," in *397 Chairs*.) On Felipe's chair lolls an adorable dog, its tail hanging insouciantly over the edge, its witty, dark eyes engaging us in some complicit way. Given the heavy meaning of the chair in the rigid semiotics of courtly etiquette in Spain, something is being conveyed beyond the fact that spoiled dogs could climb onto furniture in which courtiers would not dare sit. Some metaphysical joke? Or the suggestion that dogs hold some rank in nature higher than slaves or even certain courtiers? All I know is that a dog in a chair is not innocent naturalism. One has the sense, in fact, that everything means something awesome, which intensifies the pleasure one takes in this tremendous painter we know we will never fully understand. □

QUICK BRIGHT THINGS

And it is in September that beauty, forsaking its tenacious footholds, the durable and clumsy insistencies of summer, takes its most tenuous shapes—swallowtail, aster, cricket, and switchgrass—as if to tell us it doesn't care to put up the slightest resistance, as if to say delicacy, evanescence, and meekness are an end in themselves, and radiance flows to those who with grace and disinterest let go.

May the armed potatoes hunker in their bunkers of dark, the roots and tubers, rammed into their silos, give no ground, the skunks and weasels hold their tedious sleep against heaven, we'll go with the sweet scent of woodsmoke, the brief season of leaf-mold and midge, the short-lived, the perishable quick bright thing. Against the permanence of darkness we'll spin out a tenuous deliquescence. We'll sing.

Ronald Wallace

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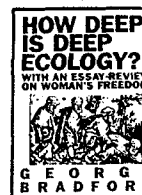
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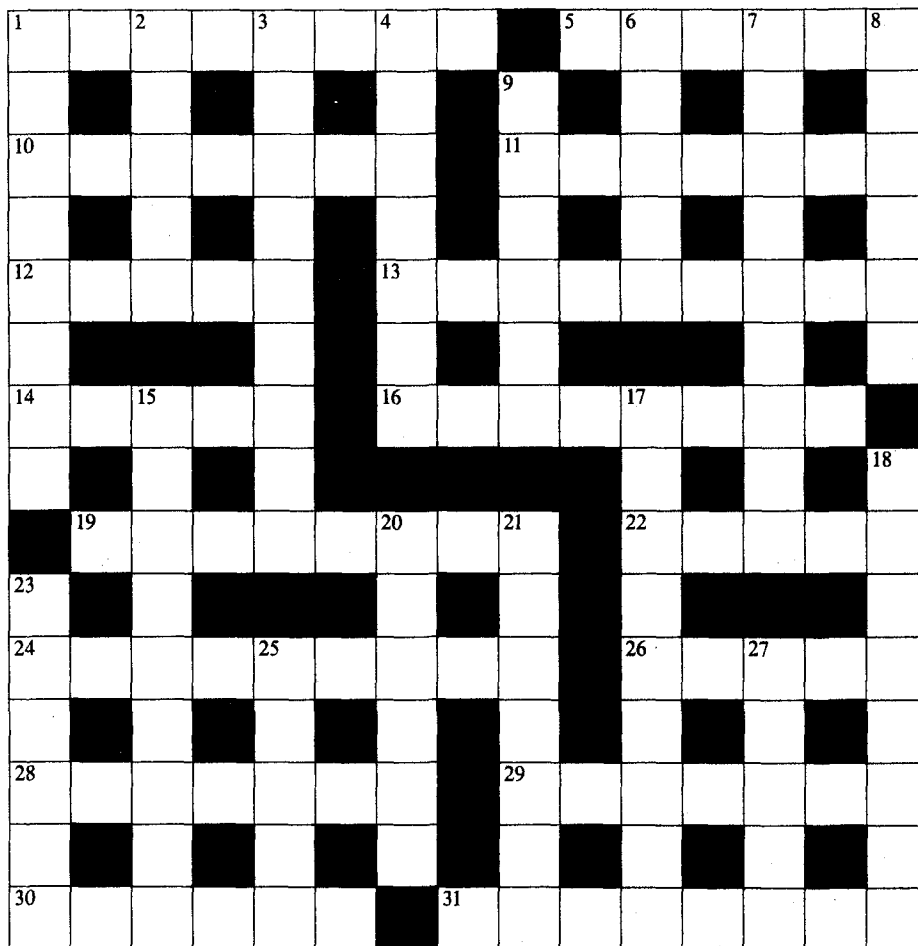
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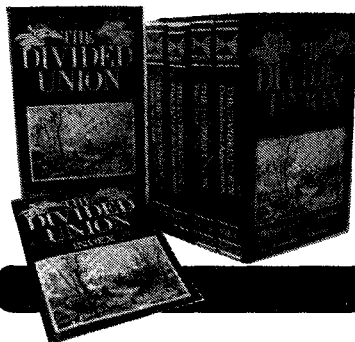
ACROSS

- 1 However, it shouldn't imply only middling concern for the sick. (8)
- 5 People such as Ford might be seen in performance. (6)
- 10 Have to have a gangster's gun inside, being refused? (7)
- 11 Hideaway? That's what one takes, in a sense (in a box?). (7)
- 12 One might with the enemy to pick up the tab. (5)
- 13 Start what might be rather fancy around one soldier, at least. (9)
- 14 Does this colorful harbinger steal out? No, quite the opposite. (5)
- 16 Left with very backward French? Indeed, as one might say! (8)
- 19 and 22 Does one have to go to class to have such a hunch? (8,6)
- 24 If you get a lift in London, it probably goes this way. (2,3,4)
- 26 In Peru, chemises have such a ruffle. (5)
- 28 Language used to identify a large piece of wood? (7)
- 29 They're likely to have a few drops of cold water. (7)
- 30 He acts badly, and swindles you, too! (6)
- 31 The breakfast food inside completely unwrapped? So one is not well off! (8)

DOWN

- 1 Find a little egg in places Doone knew of? Watch out—that's what they're supposed to do! (8)
- 2 One such as Snoopy that is a motherless stray. (5)
- 3 Tom holds something that goes with gin, being somewhat schizophrenic. (9)
- 4 Sort of wed in the backdoor—big in California! (7)
- 6 The tropical ibis has an excuse, being some place else! (5)
- 7 A G-man, seen to be in trouble? Elementary, in a sense! (9)
- 8 Every one of these should be tender, but some of them bear a cross which is colorful. (6)
- 9 Like what some people call the pictures, these might be served. (6)
- 15 Make one wet and limp where one might sleep with an old cloth on a broken leg. (9)
- 17 Observing something with respect to showing respect? (9)
- 18 Made false charges and was, per se, defamatory in part. (8)
- 20 The hothead's getting tough about it, however. (6)
- 21 Study the prong on your tooth, perhaps. (7)
- 23 Is curt but reformed as one of your old countrymen. (6)
- 25 Pottery has a number left, possibly, in Holland. (5)
- 27 A woodless 4, for example. (5)

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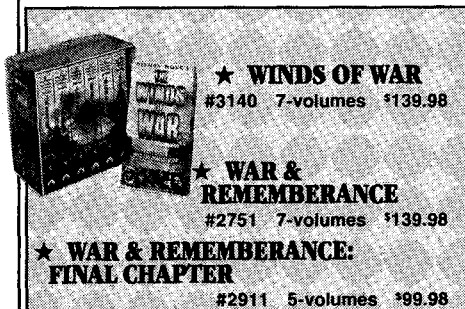
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